

**Executive**

**19 May 2022**

Report of the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee

## **Community Hubs Scrutiny Review Final Report – Cover Report**

### **Summary**

1. This cover report presents the final report from the Community Hubs Scrutiny Review undertaken by Children, Education and Communities (CEC) Policy and Scrutiny Committee. It seeks approval to the recommendations from the Executive.

### **Recommendation**

2. Having considered the Community Hubs Scrutiny Review Final Report at Appendix 1 and its annexes, the Executive is asked to approve the recommendations as shown in paragraph 6, below.

Reason: To conclude this scrutiny review in line with CYC scrutiny procedures and protocols.

### **Background**

3. There had been an unsuccessful bid for European Union funding as part of the 2016 Local Development Strategy Document and in 2017, the Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement was asked to approve a Project Plan for Local Area Based Financial Inclusion. Following the May 2019 local elections, the new administration highlighted a desire to establish more Community Hubs throughout York. From March 2020, during the pandemic, communities came together to support each other, to help provide food for the most vulnerable and to help tackle symptoms of poverty.
4. In June 2021 it was agreed by CEC to form a Scrutiny sub-group to look at how Community Hubs could best support communities in York. The following objectives were set:

- To investigate what a Community Hub can provide for its community.
- To establish how effective a Community Hub is at identifying need.
- To identify what is required to make the Community Hub model sustainable in York.

## **Consultation**

5. The Scrutiny Task Group consulted with several council officers with relevant experience, as well as a number of community hub providers around the country. Annex 4 of the attached report contains details of the Community Hub interviews.

## **Review Recommendations**

6. Following the Committee's extensive consultation and key findings, the following recommendation was approved at the Committee meeting, 03 May 2022:

That the Executive take note of the report contained within Appendix 1, particularly paragraph 10, points a-g, when setting policy and strategy on Community Hubs. Paragraph 10 is replicated below:

Successful community hubs require the following:

- a. The ability to support on a range of issues and not just one. Residents who make use of community hubs for a particular issue often have multiple complex needs.
- b. A clear desire to help people but also tackle the source of problems, not just the symptoms.
- c. An opportunity to bring communities together whilst providing safe spaces for residents with sensitive issues.
- d. A volunteer base to help with capacity and provision.
- e. Almost all the community hubs spoken to had at least some paid staff. This seemed to be a key element to a lot of provision.
- f. A clear means of income generation; whether that be through council grant, national lottery funding or in some cases it was

found that a building lent to a community hub on a long-term lease gave that organisation the ability to rent out space to generate income. It was clear that without a suitable funding model these community hubs would fail.

- g. A clear method of community consultation to generate community buy-in and identify community need.

## Officer Response

7. The roll-out of community hubs will be able to deliver on the recommendations of the scrutiny report in the following ways:

a. **The ability to support on a range of issues:** It will be essential that community hubs continue to be developed and supported on the basis that they respond to the broadest range of community need. Evidence of need/community challenge can include (but is not limited to):

- Food Poverty
- Child Poverty
- Support for families/early help
- Health and Wellbeing
- Enterprise and Access to work
- Skills development
- Equality of access to services

It will be essential for hubs to connect community resources in new and productive ways: relationships, time, skills, gifts and people and to encourage growth in social connections and relationships.

A common theme in the community hubs developed to date has been a basic food offer on a free or pay-as-you-feel basis. The benefits of this are three-fold, forming part of the welcome offer, helping household finances go further and creating a social setting where people can relax, feel supported by peers and the wider community.

b. **Tackling the source of problems, not just the symptoms:** Again, it will be essential for this principle to be at the core of the future development of hubs. Hubs must take a holistic approach, supporting the development of friendships, community networks and peer support resulting in greater resilience for individuals and the opportunity to build better lives. It needs to be recognised that hubs are

not primarily about delivery of services but rather supporting residents to lead change on the ground and to create more resilient communities. Nonetheless, by recognising the power of 'people and place' and building new relationships with communities and citizens there will be an opportunity to reshape public services to better meet community need.

- c. **Bringing communities together whilst providing safe spaces for residents with sensitive issues:** This is an important issue that means making best use of venues and, in some cases, may mean adapting premises. This is something that the council may be able to assist with in various ways.
- d. **A volunteer base to help with capacity and provision:** The continued development of volunteering will be vital. The council's investment in CVS's volunteer bureau is an important step forward in the recruitment of volunteers. It is recognised that there is further potential to work with CVS in the future on the development of hubs including in the management, support and development of volunteering.
- e. **Paid staff:** Although some hubs choose to adopt a purely voluntary model it is recognised that paid staff have a major contribution to make across many hubs. The Good Place Network has now been launched and this gives an opportunity for existing community venues to share best practice around staffing issues.

Clearly, the employment of staff depends on the development of a sound business plan. There will be the opportunity for ward members to support community hubs in their wards to develop feasibility plans or undertake pilot projects involving staffing through the use of ward budgets, especially the £200k Covid Recovery Fund that has been allocated across wards in this financial year. The council has also made available funding for the roll out of community hubs and this will be utilised through the Good Place Network. Again, this can be used to support feasibility studies / pilot projects.

- f. **Income generation:** Again, income generation is a key element of creating sustainable business plans. As with the issue of paid staff, wards will be able to support community hubs in developing their business plans both through ward funding but also by using the skills available within their ward teams.

**g. Generating community buy-in and identifying community need:**

The key to this will be using ward teams, especially Community Officers, to bring people together to look at local need and gaps in provision, to help take forward community ideas and initiatives, looking at what funding is available, and to invite comment and feedback.

It will be important this year to develop a clear communications plan around hubs including where and how people can get support in their local areas and showcasing some of the developments that have taken place. We will continue to develop mapping of what is available, including through Live Well York.

## **Options**

8. Having considered the final report at Appendix 1 and its annexes the Executive may choose to receive the report from Scrutiny and either approve and/or amend, or reject the recommendations arising from the review as set out in paragraph 6, above.

## **Council Plan 2019-23**

9. This review is linked to the following the key outcomes of the Plan.
  - Good Health and Wellbeing
  - A Better Start for Children and Young People
  - Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy
  - Safe Communities and culture for all

## **Implications and Risk Management**

10. The risks and implications associated with the review recommendations were noted by the Committee in arriving at its final report at Appendix 1.

## Contact Details

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Report Approved  Date 10/05/2022

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

### Annexes

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| Appendix 1 | Report of the Community Hubs Review Group plus annexes. |
| Appendix 2 | Equalities Impact Assessment                            |