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Decision Session – Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities   22 November 2019

Report of the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities

Connecting People and Places - A Community Hub Approach

Summary

1.   The development of community hubs as a vehicle for supporting and engaging with York's communities is a priority for the Council.

2.   The 4Community Growth Area-Based Financial Inclusion Project (4CGY) tested out a particular approach to developing community hubs over a 30 month period from 2017 onwards. This paper highlights the learning from that project and applies that learning in proposing to deliver a wider programme of developing community hubs over the next two years.

Recommendations

3.   The Executive Member is asked to:

   - Note the impact of the 4CGY project

   - Approve the approach to developing community hubs set out in paragraph 19 onwards

   Reason: To create improved community facilities and opportunities for York's residents.

Background

4.   The 4CGY project was designed primarily to promote financial inclusion through the development of community hubs at Sanderson Court Community House, Foxwood Community Centre, Red Tower and, through working with Tang Hall Big Local, at Tang Hall Community Centre. The project steered relevant services into these hubs as well as into two other locations (Clifton and Bellfarm). The project also delivered jobs fairs, volunteer development programmes and training and support for residents.

5. Partners in the delivery of 4CGY include: The community groups managing the respective community venues, Local Area Coordinators, LAT Community & Partnership Officers, Citizens Advice York, CYC Benefits Advice, Peasholme Charity – Budgeting project, Community Health Champions, Action for Elders, North Yorkshire Police, York BID, Older Citizens Advocacy York, Community First Credit Union, CYC Housing Management Officers, Community Involvement Officers.

6. The impact of the 4CGY project has been captured in a number of ways including through film, surveys, and participant feedback. The following highlights have been noted:

   - The weekly number of people attending a community hub is in excess of 200.

   - The weekly number of volunteers facilitating the community hubs is at least 23. Since the start of the project this has delivered over 5,500 hours of volunteering.

   - Since the start of the project over 9,000 meals have been served and shared, 5,460kg of food from supermarkets redistributed and seasonally up to 6 crates of apples and pears a week made available through Abundance York.

   - By aligning the Citizens Advice York (CAY) budgeting café imitative with the community hub offer CAY were able to support more than 200 clients with over 380 issues resulting in excess of £210,000 income gain.

   - CYC Benefits and Adult Social Care Advisors have been active in Community Hub settings and snap shots of results have proved very positive.

   - Training has been delivered to support volunteering, healthy eating, budgeting and employment readiness.

   - Four local Jobs Fairs have been delivered.

   - Two volunteer recognition events have been delivered.

7. Community volunteers involved in running the community hubs have expressed a commitment to the continuation of the existing community hubs and there is also a clear desire to further develop their offer and reach. Volunteers recognise the real difference that the approach is making to the lives of local residents. They are keen to share what they have learned and to increase connectivity across the city.

8. Residents attending the community hubs have expressed what a difference having locally based services and activities has made to their lives. Aside from positive outcomes with personal finance, such as benefits and budgeting advice, feedback shows that many respondents credit the community hubs with increasing feelings of connectedness, confidence and wellbeing, giving people something to look forward to each week.

9. Professionals and practitioners have also recognised the contribution of the community hubs in supporting community outreach work, noting the importance of the location and relaxed atmosphere. Service providers have reported how beneficial it is to be able to be able to connect regularly and to work alongside other services in order to maximise the impact for customers. It is also recognised that the approach supports the development of friendships, community networks and peer support resulting in greater resilience for individuals.

10. The final word should go to residents who have accessed support at a community hub and who are the best advocates for them, often referring friends and neighbours. A few quotes help to illustrate this:

    It's great meeting up with everyone in the community; this plays a very important part for those who are isolated. Chatting to the various groups of people. I met more people in 3 months than I had in 24 years of living in the area. (A Tang Hall Resident attending a TH Big Picnic)

    I'm on a small pension and coming here I can get my fruit and vegetables and it helps me a lot with being on pension. And not only that, it's better than sat at home looking at the same four walls, because that would drive me crazy. (Attendee at Red Tower)

    Sometimes I bring my Grandson, in the holidays. It's really brought out his confidence, he comes and helps out, he wants to go in to caring, so it's good to do some volunteering here while he's on holidays. It's really brought his confidence out, he used to get really panicky in crowds but he's so much better now. (Attendee at Chapelfields)

    It's had a very big impact on people who struggle to live a healthier and more social life; it brings the community together. (Attendee at Foxwood)

What are the key elements of a Community Hub?

11.   There is not a one size fits all model which could describe the community hubs developed as part of 4CGY; the critical factor is that all have emerged as a result of an approach which is community led and needs based. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some common components:

12.   **Place** - A successful community hub will be located in an area where there is a need for support services and a lack of a focal point for community activity, in an accessible, safe space which is either already at the heart of community activity or has the potential to develop a positive identity within the local community. The venue will be community managed minimising any perceived barriers to service providers and encouraging sustainability. Food has been a very important element of the current community hubs and having a food offer requires good basic kitchen facilities and trained volunteers.

13.   **People** – The community hub approach is a live example of the People Helping People Strategy and co-production. The project has demonstrated that a partnership of resident volunteers and front line service providers in a community setting has offered the opportunity to build relationships and trust in order to facilitate effective engagement which reflects local need:

   •   In the west side of the city the two community hubs have been very successful in attracting older people to participate

   •   In Tang Hall activities have proved particularly attractive to extended families especially those with young children

   •   The Red Tower community hub attracts people of all ages particularly from the immediate area and has supported the integration of a newly appointed community space as a focal point for the community encouraging a sense of ownership

14.   **Purpose** - The established community hubs provide a focal point for community activity and have impacted positively on the numbers of people using community facilities. The community hubs have all been developed in response to a local need motivated by connecting people to financial inclusion support and services. A clear initial purpose galvanises activity and motivates people to volunteer and engage.

15.   **Connectivity** - The hubs are connecting multiple forms of resource in new and productive ways: relationships, time, skills, gifts and

people. All encourage growth in social connections and relationships. The more people involved means we are connecting multiple resources, and moving from a previous deficit model with a narrow focus on finances to creating one of abundance.

16. A common theme of all of the community hubs developed to date has been a basic food offer on a free or pay-as-you-feel basis. This has been in the form of cooked meals eaten in the community venues and 'food shops' utilising food donated by supermarkets. The benefits of this being 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.

Next steps

17. Next steps in the development of community hubs will need to be guided by two imperatives: to respond to the desire to see a model of community hubs rolled out across the city whilst, at the same time, building on the learning from 4CGY to ensure that hubs are community led. It is therefore proposed to take a dual approach with a universal strand designed to support all communities in the development of their community facilities, in addition to a more targeted, developmental approach responding to identified areas of community need.

18. The Council has allocated funding, through its supplementary budget, for a staffing resource to support the development of community hubs. It has also repurposed Leeds City Region Business Rates Pool funding to give a sharper focus on local economic development and financial inclusion through hubs. These funds have been combined to create a project officer post to support the development of this dual approach.

A Universal Approach

19. In the universal approach the Council will offer support to all community venues to develop their respective offers as community hubs. Support will be provided to assist community venues, where appropriate, to develop a range of offers to their local communities. Examples may include:

- Maintaining good information and signposting e.g. a presence on and an understanding of how to use *Live Well York*

- Practical support in managing a safe and welcoming community venue:

i. A focus on health and safety and developing good working practises

ii. Training packages to develop volunteers skills and knowledge e.g. food hygiene

iii. Support in marketing and promotion e.g. website/social media campaigns

iv. Building maintenance and contracts

v. Governance of the volunteer management committee

vi. Understanding funding and money management

vii. Customer insight

20. A "Good Place Network" will also be developed for York and all community venues will be invited to join. Feedback from practitioners and volunteers involved in the community hubs supports this as a way forward and there is the opportunity here to build on the established and well respected Community Centres Network. It will be led by the sector with support from the Council.

21. This network will be developed to work with community hub partners, offering them the tools to set up, develop and maintain their projects as volunteers. It will also offer opportunities for peer support and sharing best practice. At least one city-wide good practice and networking event per annum will be delivered through the network.

22. It is proposed to support the "Good Place Network" in developing a York Community Hubs accreditation scheme. Accreditation will come with a highly visible badge / logo, recognising the venue as meeting the requirements to be a York Community Hub. This badging will both recognise the work and achievements of the venue and its volunteers and also let local residents know what they can expect from their local community facility.

23. Accreditation, which would be managed by a sub-group of the Good Place Network, will reflect the quality and diversity of a venue's offer, as set out in paragraph 19 above, as well as the quality of the management and governance arrangements. Tools are available at a national level to assist in this. For example, a scheme called "Visible Communities", produced by Community Matters, the national federation of community organisations, and endorsed by the Charity Commission, aims to help trustees and volunteers to develop / review their governance and management arrangements to ensure they are up to date, legally compliant, and adhering to

best practice. It is based around a set of seven core principles that underpin strong sustainable community organisations:

- A VOICE to represent issues of local concern
- An INDEPENDENT and politically neutral organisation
- A SERVICE provider for local people
- An INITIATOR of projects to meet locally identified needs
- A BUILDER of partnerships with other local organisations and groups
- A strong LOCAL network of people and organisations
- A way to ENGAGE local people to become active in their communities

24. Visible Communities offers an easy-to-use on-line development tool leading to the creation of an online quality file which can be revisited, edited and updated as the organisation develops. It is free to register and use (there is the additional option to pay for an independent review and report as well to complete the VISIBLE Accredited Standards). The "Good Place Network" may choose to use this tool, or an alternative quality management system, or may prefer to develop local criteria for York. Whichever scheme is chosen, a toolkit will be developed to support its implementation to ensure that it is simple to use and not overly bureaucratic.

25. The Good Place Network will be supported by the Council's Community Coordinator who will assist with any necessary administration around accreditation. The following table sets out an indicative timetable for development of this scheme:

Task	2020				2021			
Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Setting up the network	■							
Establishing accreditation criteria		■						
Development of toolkit			■					
Roll out of toolkit				■				
Annual conference				■				■
First awards					■			
Support to new hubs	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A Development Approach

26. This strand will build on the success of the 4CGY project. The project officer will maintain the working relationships established with the existing community hubs and will proactively seek opportunities to develop additional community hubs either through creating something new or working with existing provision to develop a community hub approach. The development offer will be city-wide but will prioritise work in the communities facing the greatest challenges utilising the following checklist:

- 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
- Identification of a suitable venue
- Existence of or potential for the development of a community group or organisation willing to take on the management of a community hub
- Potential for sustainability

27. Examples of potential projects could include utilising the approach in Clifton (e.g. the creation of the new community space at Marjorie Waite Court) or considering the use of buildings suitable for engagement with families such as children's centres and libraries.

28. The project may also commission pieces of work to complement and enhance the approach, e.g. training and best practice events for volunteers and wider community members. The work will also include a focus on enterprise and jobs and opportunities will be sought to understand the needs of local businesses and to encourage greater community involvement. In particular, the project officer will coordinate and support the community engagement aspects of the Inclusive Growth projects detailed in the report to the Executive Leader Decision Session held on 18 September 2019. Building on the community hubs model, this strand of work will give a sharper focus to local economic development and financial inclusion. This may include looking at childcare, transport, housing,

food and energy costs and working with families in poverty to find ways to maximise earning potential and minimise living costs.

Future Developments

29. It should be stressed that the model of community hubs aims to respond to and support community need; it is not led by a focus on buildings or by a desire to find solutions for particular council assets; it is not the same thing as the community asset strategy, albeit there should be close alignment between the two strategies.

30. The described model of community hubs nurtures trusting relationships within communities. Research tells us that these relationships are fundamental to developing a holistic approach to the early identification of need and early help. The methodology builds capacity within communities and gives a voice to 'experts by experience' offering crucial insight into the impact of key challenges in communities and opportunities to co-design solutions.

31. Through intervening early and recognising the power of 'people and place' we will continue to build new relationships with communities and citizens and reform public services. Critically people are at the heart of this process, being supported to lead change on the ground and to create more resilient communities.

Options

32. It is open to the Executive Member to approve the proposed approach or to suggest an amended approach.

Analysis

33. This initiative has the potential to create improved community facilities for local residents as well as opportunities for York citizens to take a lead in tackling local issues and developing services to meet local need.

Council Plan

34. This report supports the Council's commitment to working with both local residents and with partners to improve York's communities. This initiative will make a particular contribution to the following Council Plan themes:

- 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

Risk Management

35. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified associated with the proposals contained in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and to deliver services, leading to damage to the Council's reputation and failure to meet stakeholders' expectations. The level of risk is assessed as "Low". This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

Contact Details

Authors	Director responsible for the report
Mora Scaife mora.scaife@york.gov.uk 01904 551834 Andy Laslett andrew.laslett@york.gov.uk 01904 553370 Joe Micheli Joe.micheli@york.gov.uk 01904 552570	Amanda Hatton Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities

Report Approved:	✔	Date:	12.11.19.
Wards Affected:		All	✔

For further information please contact the authors of the report

Background Papers:

People Helping People Strategy

Good and bad help – How purpose and confidence transform lives - Nesta

From Tiny Acorns - Communities shaping the future of Children's Services – Dr Pawda Tjoa – New Local Government Network