

A review of Community Partnerships – May 2021

Cllr David Beavan

Q1: Why are ward members not informed of grant applications in their ward? (paragraph 2.5)

A1: All Ward Members are part of their Community Partnership and therefore have the opportunity to attend/actively participate in CP meetings, including those where funding decisions are made. The exception to this is the small grants schemes where the process is usually that volunteers from the CP (effectively a subgroup) form a Grants Panel that makes decisions on the CP's behalf, and a number of Councillors have been part of their CP Small Grants Panel. The decisions/outcomes of each Grants Panel are communicated to the full membership of the CP concerned at the next meeting and/or via email.

Q2: Will rural transport be restored to its prime position as we move out of the pandemic? (paragraph 3.1)

A2: Yes, the focus on sustainable transport (including rural transport) is being renewed in 2021/22 as we move through the different stages of the roadmap out of Covid. The work overseen by the multi-agency East Suffolk Transport and Travel Programme Group, supported by the Transport Project Officer (Jack Raven, second from EDF on a part time basis) is providing a foundation for this in the form of a scoping report with recommendations for action based on conversations with the eight Community Partnership Chairs and key partners such as Suffolk County Council and community transport providers. The Community Partnership Board agreed a funding pot of £80,000 in 2020/21 which will enable us to pilot innovative transport projects in the individual Community Partnership areas.

Q3: It seems to me that “pet” schemes are being passed down to communities rather than communities’ own proposals being prioritised. Can we have more bottom up and less top-down policies, please? (paragraph 3.2)

A3: Each Community Partnership has set its priorities and decided how it wishes to start to address these priorities. There have been suggestions from Communities Officers and other ESC staff about project ideas emerging from conversations with Town/Parish Councils, community groups and voluntary sector organisations but hopefully the range of projects funded across the eight areas and the lack of the same projects appearing in the list in 3.6 demonstrate that the process is bottom up and not top down. Apart from small grants schemes, there are very few projects (talking benches and the ‘virtual mile’ project being the two exceptions) that appear in the list for more than one CP area that share the same priorities. The only bottom-up projects that have not progressed either a) needed more development or b) did not address at least one of the CP priorities. As we continue to develop our eight CP's we will strongly encourage them to continue to use task and finish groups to develop projects from the ground up as this is an effective way

to ensure wider, grassroots engagement.

Q4: (a) Have we any monitoring results yet? Can we ensure that we publish these within a year of a grant? (paragraph 3.7)
(b) Can we measure lasting benefits and seek to make our efforts sustainable by encouraging social enterprise?

A4: (a) **Not yet, but we will collect the Monitoring Information through the new Community Partnerships Funding Officer Kevin Wegg and make it available for dissemination and reporting at the end of each project, including on the CP website. Ongoing, informal monitoring is also recommended to each CP for each of their funded projects e.g. updates at CP meetings.**

(b) **Absolutely. The organisations funded through the CP Board, the individual Community Partnerships and the small grants come in a range of forms including social enterprises. All grant applications forms include questions about sustainability to ensure that applicants have considered next steps once their grant funding has been spent. We have also commissioned CAS to deliver bespoke business planning support for VCSE organisations in East Suffolk aimed at supporting growth in voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations as well as increasing their sustainability.**

Cllr Louise Gooch

Please may I make it clear that my questions are not to be read as criticism of the very good work undertaken so far.

Q5: Is the general funding model of £10,000 /£25,000 per Community Partnership regardless of the population base adequate and fit for purpose, or is a review of the funding model necessary?

A5: **It is felt that the current model works, although this could be reviewed in the future if a clear case is made to do so. Each Community Partnership has its own unique challenges including higher levels of deprivation, large number of rural settlements, multiple town centres and greater or lesser access to external funding. It is important to note that ESC also funds Place Based Initiatives in three of the most deprived communities – namely Lowestoft Rising, Leiston Together and Felixstowe Forward. The Council’s approach to place-based working is currently being reviewed and a report will be considered by Cabinet in June 2021.**

Q6: What analysis is being undertaken to gauge how the benefits of the projects map out onto those communities identified as having higher than average levels of deprivation?

A6: **Over the coming year we intend to map more of our activity to ensure that there is a clear view of where funding is being allocated. It is important to remember however that allocating funding is only one element/tool in terms of the joint problem solving that the CPs were set up in order to do. In some cases it may be that other funding can be identified which is more appropriate to support a particular project, enabling the CP funding to be allocated to other projects. The Hidden Needs mapping which was updated**

in 2020 identifies target areas in terms of isolation and loneliness and the spread of grants across these areas has been mapped.

Q7: In terms of the gaps identified in expertise or focus in panel membership (3.4) what is being done to address this?

A7: As outlined in the report, we are working with Suffolk Association of Local Councils and Community Action Suffolk to boost Town and Parish Council and Voluntary and Community Sector membership respectively. The Rural Proofing recommendations have been incorporated into the revised Terms of Reference for 2021/22 and aim to ensure that the needs of rural communities are given robust consideration. Our focus over the next 12 months will be on engaging with protected characteristics groups at the most appropriate level – which could be inviting them to attend the CP itself or a Task and Finish Group or indeed it may be more effective for the Communities Officer and Chair to attend one of their meetings to seek members views on CP activity.

Q8: What wider research is being undertaken to glean lessons in good practice in other authorities?

A8: A peer review of our work around Community Partnerships is being undertaken through the Local Government Association in Autumn 2021. One of the aims is to obtain an external view of our Community Partnership programme to date and to feed in best practice from elsewhere through our peer reviewers. Before setting up the Community Partnerships the Council did extensive research (with support from the LGA and MHCLG) into other similar initiatives around the country and we spoke to representatives of a number of these in shaping our ideas.

Q9: What analysis is undertaken to look at the cross-community partnerships and how projects or funding might be shared?

A9: The Partnerships Manager and Funding Support Officer maintain oversight of the activity of all eight CPs and provide a simple monthly summary of that activity to the CP Chairs. Several projects that have emerged in one CP area have either been extended across more than one CP area (e.g. Voice of a Friend) or subsequently been taken up by others, for example the Lowestoft Mile and Talking Benches. In addition, projects from individual CPs, including the Mental Health First Aid for Communities project that started in the Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Martlesham, Carlford and Fynn Valley have been picked up at a Community Partnership Board level. This is something that could be built upon through the Chairs meetings where best practice and innovative ways of working are shared.

Q10: Are we reviewing whether the boundaries of the CPBs best reflect the communities served? (For example, Carlton Colville is detached from Lowestoft; do we think this is wise?)

A10: Significant discussion took place before the Community Partnership areas were set, not least to try to ensure that the Lowestoft Community Partnership, which is almost twice the size of the next largest, was manageable without splitting it using an arbitrary north south divide. Adding Carlton Colville into the Lowestoft CP area would potentially make that one unmanageable in terms of size and make the Carlton Colville, Kessingland and Southwold CP too small and unviable. This will be reviewed at some point though.

Cllr Caroline Topping

Q:11 Equalities and Diversity: The aim of the Community Partnerships is to enable greater involvement from all sections of the East Suffolk community in decision making and co-production of solutions to local needs. Links have been developed between the Partnerships / Board and Protected Characteristic groups such as Youth Voice and the Disability Forums.'

(a) Who else is included in this greater involvement please? I see Youth Voice and Disability Forums and I know you can't list everybody, but I am looking at specifically BAME groups for other ethnic and cultural input please.

(b) "2.7 Each Community Partnership Chair is an East Suffolk Councillor." I believe all the Chairs are from the administration. Does it say anywhere that the Chairs have to be from the administration?

A11:

(a) We are looking at engagement with additional sections of the community over the coming months on an individual CP level given the differences in the demographics of each CP area. We are keen to do more to provide opportunities to engage with different communities of interest over the coming 12 months although this is as likely to be us going out to groups, as per the conversations that we have been leading with members of the BAME community, as them attending regular CP meetings

(b) The Terms of Reference state that 'Each CP will be Chaired by an ES Councillor for the CP area, appointed by the Leader of East Suffolk Council'