



## East Suffolk Community Partnership Board

### Community Partnership Forum 2021

September 6, 2021

#### Introduction and Background

1. The 2020 Community Partnership Forum was a week-long event held entirely online due to the restrictions in place because of the Covid-19 pandemic - a second national lockdown commenced the week of the Forum.
2. Forum in numbers:
  - 10 separate sessions (and an 11th additional Fringe Event)
  - A total of 16.5 hours of presentations and discussion
  - A total of 208 delegates across the week
  - 593 individual bookings over the 10 sessions, as most people attended more than one
3. The Forum was held between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November and each day had a different theme:

Monday: **“Bringing ideas to life” Launch Event** with an update on Community Partnerships, the launch of a new promotional video and keynote speaker, Dominic Campbell (CEO of FutureGov)

Tuesday: **Tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness in East Suffolk** – including sessions with Cormac Russell, Kim Leadbetter from the Jo Cox Foundation and Tracy Robbins from Eden Project Communities.

Wednesday: **Travel and Transport in East Suffolk** – focus on Connecting Our Rural Communities and Making Travel More Active and Sustainable.

Thursday: **Focus on Technology** – East Suffolk Smart Towns Project and Innovative Technology

Friday: **“Looking to the Future in East Suffolk” Closing Event** – a review of the week, followed by a presentation about the potential impacts of Covid-19 on East Suffolk people and places structured around the themes of Population and Deprivation, Health and Wellbeing, Employment and Economy, Housing and Welfare Support and Communities and Inequality.

4. Participants in all sessions were asked to complete an evaluation form. These showed that 75% of those who responded felt that the Forum was an ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ use of

their time and that 95% of respondents rated the organisation of the event as 'excellent' or 'good'.

5. When asked what format delegates would prefer the Forum to take in future years, more than 60% said a combination of virtual and physical events and 30% said virtual events with only around 5% preferring a physical event only. Following discussion of these results as part of the overall report on the conference at the December 2020 Board meeting, it was agreed that the 2021 event should be a combination of virtual and physical events but that ideally at least one day would be held at Trinity Park and be face to face.
6. At the time that this was agreed, the Covid-19 case rates were still extremely high and there was huge uncertainty about the future. Since then, we have faced a third national lockdown followed by the gradual easing of restrictions as vaccination rates have increased. However, the virus still has a significant presence in the district, region and nationally and East Suffolk had the highest case rate in the region a few weeks ago (immediately following Latitude). It is therefore felt that holding an event (as in pre-Covid years) for 150-200 people at Trinity Park would not be wise in only two-months' time. In addition, when the Forum was held in 2020 it was innovative as it was one of the first virtual conferences. Such formats are incredibly popular now and there is some evidence that people are experiencing on-line conference fatigue.
7. It is therefore proposed that the date booked for the face-to-face session at the Forum – Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November - be used instead for a much smaller 'visioning' session for the Board and a handful of additional guests selected to inform the conversation. This would focus on a review of progress since 2019, the outcomes and recommendations of the LGA Peer Review of Community Partnerships taking place in October 2021 and provide an opportunity to discuss and agree the focus of the Board for 2022/23.
8. A full Forum would then be held in Spring 2022 – with a programme of smaller face to face and/or virtual events in the week/weeks preceding an event at Trinity Park on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## **Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Note the proposal to hold a visioning event for Board Members at Trinity Park on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021**
- b) Note the proposal to hold a Forum week/weeks in March 2022, culminating in a full half day face to face Forum at Trinity Park on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**

Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities, East Suffolk Council