



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Enabling Communities Task Group** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Melton on **Friday 5 October 2018** at **9.30am**

**Members of the Task Group present:**

J Bidwell, C Block, C Blundell, P Coleman, P Dunnett, M Gower, TJ Haworth-Culf, S Lawson, D Savage.

**Other Members present:**

None.

**Officers present:**

N Khan (Strategic Director), M Makin (Democratic Services Business Manager), B Porter (Funding Officer), N Rickard (Head of Communities).

**Others present:**

P Richardson (Chief Executive, Community Action Suffolk)

**1. Election of a Chairman**

On the proposition of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Blundell it was

**RESOLVED**

That Councillor J Bidwell be elected Chairman of the Enabling Communities Task Group for the 2018/2019 Municipal Year.

**2. Election of a Vice-Chairman**

On the proposition of Councillor Bidwell, seconded by Councillor Haworth-Culf it was

**RESOLVED**

That Councillor S Lawson be elected Vice-Chairman of the Enabling Communities Task Group for the 2018/2019 Municipal Year.

**3. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones. Councillor Gower acted as Substitute.

**4. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

## 5. MINUTES

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously

### RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 January 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 6. Community Action Suffolk – Current Priorities and Projects and Joint Work

The Task Group received a presentation from Peter Richardson, Chief Executive of Community Action Suffolk (CAS).

Mr Richardson explained to the Task Group the purpose of CAS and how they supported the local community. He described it as an umbrella organisation, supporting voluntary sector organisations.

The presentation covered CAS's four strategic priorities; to support a diverse and resilient VCSE sector to build capacity and sustainability, stimulating and developing impactful community and voluntary action, creating and maintaining influential and equitable beneficial relationships across sectors, and to develop CAS as a sustainable and essential organisation.

Mr Richardson outlined the support given to the voluntary sector through specialist roles, highlighting recent General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) training that had been provided at cost, to assure that charity organisations were compliant with the new regulation.

The Task Group was informed of the Good Neighbour Scheme supported by CAS to combat loneliness and create community cohesion, as well as a major volunteering campaign to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War; the latter was launched by the High Sherriff of Suffolk at St Mary's Primary School in Woodbridge. A bespoke local website for people to find local volunteering opportunities was also highlighted.

Mr Richardson explained the challenge of being a voice for the voluntary sector in Suffolk, noting that there were 2,500 registered charities in the county. He spoke on work undertaken to improve public perception of charities, following the recent negative publicity relating to Oxfam and Kids Company.

He added that CAS had worked with the University of Suffolk to research the public perception of the voluntary sector. This had shown that younger people tended to support national charities, and that older people supported local charities.

It was acknowledged by Mr Richardson that the availability of grants was diminishing, and that the public sector had less money to invest in the voluntary sector. He said that CAS was working to be self-supporting and was doing so by providing insurance, DBS check and IT services for the voluntary sector.

Mr Richardson highlighted joint working that had taken place between CAS and the Councils, including Lowestoft Community Enablers, Felixstowe Time Bank, Lowestoft Rising, Leiston Together, and Felixstowe Forward.

The Task Group was informed that for every £1 received by CAS through grants, the organisation put £6 back into the economy.

The Chairman invited questions to Mr Richardson.

A member of the Task Group noted that it would be useful for Councillors to have an “aide memoire” on the services CAS provided, to signpost them to more detailed information. Mr Richardson agreed that this would be a useful resource; he confirmed that he would circulate the presentation to the Task Group and would progress creating a resource for Councillors to access.

Another member of the Task Group, who was the Ward Member for Deben, was disappointed to see that there was an urban focus to joint working; she noted the rural nature of her Ward and the struggles of local parishes to obtain support for a major housing project between parishes. She said that she would welcome support from CAS in her Ward, as the cost for a Housing Needs Survey for six parishes was not affordable.

In response, Mr Richardson requested that the affected parishes make contact with him so that CAS could work with them to create an affordable and flexible solution. He agreed that urban areas tended to be magnets for support and said that CAS strived to maintain links with rural areas.

A member of the Task Group, who was also the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customers, Communities and Leisure, asked if more could be done to publicise the winter fuel payment scheme. Mr Richardson advised that CAS was running a Community Oil Bank at a significantly reduced price, but was not administering the winter fuel payment scheme itself and that this was done by the Suffolk Community Foundation.

## **7. East Suffolk Communities Team – Impact One Year On**

The Task Group received a presentation from the Head of Communities.

She informed the Task Group that the East Suffolk Communities Team had been in place for twelve months and that the purpose of the presentation was to update the Task Group on the team’s work and the projects that had been undertaken.

The formation of the team was covered; it was made up of Officers from the Council, Waveney District Council and Suffolk County Council. A breakdown of Officers was given; the team was made up of twenty-five staff across the three councils. It was noted that twelve of these posts were temporary and due to end within the next eighteen months.

The team contained eight Communities Officers, each with an assigned area within East Suffolk. The Head of Communities advised the Task Group that the areas would need to be adjusted once the warding for the new East Suffolk Council was agreed.

The team had been created with a model where all Officers had a basic understanding to support enabling communities, community development, community safety and health and wellbeing.

A budget of £70,000 had been provided by Suffolk County Council to support the development of the team. This was divided to £3,000 per Communities Officer in the Suffolk Coastal area, and £2,000 per Communities Officer in the Waveney area plus project funding for projects such as the Felixstowe Timebank and Lowestoft Foodbank. "Hidden Needs" mapping was being used to target the work of the team.

It was confirmed to the Task Group that the Economic Development Team was working to the same eight areas that the East Suffolk Communities Team was working to.

The Head of Communities advised that there had been a focus on addressing social isolation and loneliness, as this was an increasing issue in communities and had been shown to be very damaging to mental health.

An overview was given on the impact of projects in each of the eight areas covered by the East Suffolk Communities Team. The impact of East Suffolk wide projects was also outlined to the Task Group, along with cross-cutting projects with other organisations.

The Chairman invited questions to the Head of Communities.

A member of the Task Group, who was Ward Member for Martlesham, noted that the presentation had referred to Brightwell Lakes. He asked for further detail relating to this, as Brightwell Lakes had not yet been constructed and would be within his Ward.

The Head of Communities explained that discussions had been undertaken with planners regarding establishing a sense of community when Brightwell Lakes was completed, and to provide input regarding dementia friendly housing and open space design. No specific projects had been considered.

It was noted by another member of the Task Group that the contract of the Local Area Co-ordinator, whose area covered his Ward, was coming to an end. He highlighted the high quality work undertaken by the Officer and the resultant rapid improvements obtained for young people in the area. He was concerned that the loss of the Officer would result in backslide and queried if this approach provided value for money.

In response, the member of the Task Group who was also the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customers, Communities and Leisure advised that she had raised this at the Leiston Together board; she was pleased to confirm that the Chairman of Leiston Together was hoping to offer the Officer a position at Leiston Together, so that she could continue the work that was being undertaken.

The Head of Communities expanded on this; she explained that further funding from Suffolk County Council for two Local Area Co-ordinators had been hoped for, but had not happened. She acknowledged the positives of the offer from Leiston Together and hoped that a similar solution could be found for the other Local Area Co-ordinator.

Another member of the Task Group raised the issue of the sustainability of projects, particularly in rural areas, and suggested that sustainability should be considered at the

beginning of a project. She gave an example from her own Ward where an elderly couple, one of whom had dementia, had been provided with outreach support which had later ended.

The Head of Communities agreed with the Member's comments and said that funding sustainability was a large challenge.

She highlighted that Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group had a transformation fund of £4m to transfer health and social care and that there had been a successful bid, led by SCDC, for £550,000 for social prescribing across the Ipswich and East Suffolk area. The Task Group was advised, in response to an example raised by a Member, that support was available to groups to create a business and/or project plan. The Head of Communities said that projects were starting to consider sustainability in the long term and were pausing work at an early stage as a result.

She explained that social prescribing had been delivered through Kirkley Mill Health Centre in Lowestoft and had resulted in 44% less people needing to access GP appointments. GP surgeries were now both supporting and investing this approach.

A member of the Task Group noted the disparity between deprivation and wealth within rural communities and suggested that further work was needed to consider how to direct funding into those communities, including looking to those within the community to help fund projects where they can.

Another member of the Task Group asked for clarification on how the Worry Tree Café in Wickham Market and Framlingham worked. The Head of Communities explained that it was a service aimed at those people with mental health issues, but was not labelled as such. It operated as a safe space where people could access refreshments and talks on specific issues, for instance the rollout of Universal Credit.

The Task Group was advised, in response to an example raised by a Member, that support is available to groups to create a business plan.

Members of the Task Group asked the Head of Communities to send their thanks to the East Suffolk Communities Team regarding its hard work.

*Following the conclusion of the item, the Chairman adjourned the meeting for a short break at 10.42am. The meeting was reconvened at 10.50am.*

## **8. Enabling Grants (Enabling Communities Budget and Exemplar Grants)**

The Task Group received a presentation from the Funding Officer.

It was advised that in 2017/18, 205 applications were made for Enabling Communities grants, and a total of £265,088.63 was awarded. The applicants ranged from Town and Parish Councils to sports clubs and community groups. Projects funded included play equipment, defibrillators, Christmas events, and activities relating to the Men's Tour in 2017.

Specific detail was given on projects at Level Two in Felixstowe, the Art Station in Saxmundham and Little Bealings Church.

The Funding Officer informed the Task Group that in 2018/19, 89 applications for Enabling Communities grants had been made to date and that so far, £96,375.32 had been awarded leaving £176,039.68 in the budget. Examples of projects included Science by the Sea in Aldeburgh and speed indicators for villages.

In 2017/18, 19 Exemplar projects had been approved. The total committed funding for the year was £160,211.64.

The Funding Officer gave examples from specific projects, including Brook Farm Residents Association, Hour Community in Framlingham, CAS (on behalf of Felixstowe Forward) for the Felixstowe Timebank and St Andrew's Church in Felixstowe.

In 2018/19, £107,170.50 had been committed to date for 14 projects. A hold was placed on Exemplar bids until further funding was secured. A further £45,000 had been secured for the fund and applications had been re-opened. Five projects were due for consideration on Monday 8 October 2018.

Specific examples of funded projects were given which included Westleton Village Hall, Aldeburgh Museum, Framlingham Area Youth Action Partnership and Wenhaston Village Hall.

The Chairman invited questions to the Funding Officer.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that it would be worthwhile for Members to be reminded how much they have remaining in their Enabling Communities budgets, given the amount remaining to be committed. The Funding Officer agreed to take this forward and noted that resources were available for Members to promote projects in their wards.

The Funding Officer advised that an addition would be made to the Enabling Communities grant application form, so that applicants acknowledge the funding and undertake promotion of this with Ward Members.

A member of the Task Group thanked the Funding Officer for his hard work and stated that, in her opinion, the current grants system was the best one that had been run by the Council, making a difference in moving projects forward. She wanted to see a similar system operated by the new East Suffolk Council.

The Head of Communities acknowledged the Member's comments on the continuation of the grants scheme, and stated that the Leaders of both councils were keen for this to happen.

Members of the Task Group raised the issue of repeat funding to projects. It was noted by Members that the terms of funding did not allow for this even when projects required year-on-year funding or began new pieces of work with different groups of people.

In response, the member of the Task Group who was also the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customers, Communities and Leisure noted that Enabling Communities grant applications could be applied for with phasing in mind and suggested that the Economic Development team could assist with identifying a project's needs and if

Exemplar funding was more suitable. She also added that a project could apply again for Enabling Communities funding if it was apparent it was for a new piece of work.

*Councillors Gower and Haworth-Culf both left the meeting at this point (11.08am).*

Another member of the Task Group asked if a different approach to the Exemplar fund was required, noting that if additional funding had not been secured it would have led to disappointment for other projects. The Funding Officer said that knowledge of the fund had spread via word of mouth, and stated that a different approach to the commitment of funds could be explored when developing new schemes for the new council.

The Chairman concluded by stating that the Task Group was assured of the value of both funds; he considered that the funds brought Ward Members closer to their communities and hoped that similar schemes would be operated by the new council.

The Meeting concluded at 11.13am.