



Cabinet 10 December 2013

Recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Draft Families and Communities Strategy (Nov13/02)

1. Summary and reasons for recommendation

- 1.1 On 4 December 2013 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Report E182, which provides information on the Draft West Suffolk Families and Communities Strategy (the Strategy), which has been developed in conjunction with Forest Heath District Council.
- 1.2 The Strategy provides the framework for reshaping the relationship between the Council, its communities and their families. Its aim is to foster resilience in local communities and seeks to address the dependency culture which can build up when the Council is seen as the first port of call for any issue.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that, subject to the approval of full Council, the West Suffolk Families and Communities Strategy, as contained in Appendix A to Report E182, be adopted.

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3. Corporate priorities

- 3.1 The recommendation meets the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:
- (a) Corporate Priority 2: '*Working together for Strong, Healthy and Diverse Communities.*'; and
 - (b) Vision 2025: St Edmundsbury will be a place: V:He3 where local support networks for the whole community are on hand to provide advice on emotional and physical well being.

4. Key issues

- 4.1 The Committee considered Report E182, which provides information on the Draft West Suffolk Families and Communities Strategy (the Strategy), which has been developed in conjunction with Forest Heath District Council. The Strategy was attached to Report E182 as Appendix A. It provides the framework for reshaping the relationship between the Council, its communities and their families. The aim is to foster resilience in local communities and seeks to address the dependency culture which can build up when the Council is seen as the first port of call for any issue. The Strategy is deliberately focused on supporting families by providing support early, rather than when a family is in crisis; is a preventative approach which is both better for the families and reduces the demand placed on public services by those in crisis.
- 4.2 The approach outlined in the Strategy is founded on an asset-based approach to working with communities which focuses on the strengths a community already has and can build on, rather than a focus on deficits or problems. It is based in the knowledge that sustainable local solutions can only come from the communities themselves, and not from Council generated projects.
- 4.3 The thinking behind the Strategy has been reflected in the creation of a Families and Communities Team as part of the Leisure, Culture and Communities restructuring. The team will provide locality officer support to councillors across both Councils as they engage in their local communities. Officers will be working with Councillors to support local communities in delivering the projects they are motivated in taking forward.
- 4.4 It also outlines the importance of the early years of the development of children and the case for supporting families to give both the children and parents the best life changes. The benefits of this approach disperse into wider agendas such as improvements in health and wellbeing, greater contributions to the local economy and less crime and anti social behaviour.
- 4.5 An initial work programme has been drafted and would evolve as the Strategy is implemented. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but provides an indication of some of the ways in which engagement with communities will be different in future
- 4.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Strategy in detail and asked a number of questions to which the Cabinet Member for Communities and officers provided comprehensive responses.

4.7 In particular, discussions were held on:

- (a) the role of the eight locality officers and the support they will provide to Councillors in their wards across West Suffolk;
- (b) how to encourage the 'connectors' in the communities to talk to each other;
- (c) what communities can do for themselves; and
- (d) Councillors being more proactive in their communities and being aware of issues.

4.8 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has put forward a recommendation as provided in Section 2.

5. Other options considered

5.1 See Report E182.

6. Community impact

6.1 See Report E182.

7. Consultation

7.1 See Report E182.

8. Financial and resource implications (*including asset management implications*)

8.1 See Report E182.

9. Risk/opportunity assessment (*potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives*)

9.1 See Report E182.

10. Legal and policy implications

10.1 See Report E182.

11. Wards affected

11.1 All Wards.

12. Background papers

12.1 Report E182 to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Draft Families and Communities Strategy

13. Documents attached

None.