

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

People and Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2021

Report of: Sarah Robson, Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: The report provides an overview of Community Empowerment and sets out the development of a Community Planning and Empowerment Toolkit which will provide a framework for developing and building community capacity.

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Council's Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Lesley Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Sarah Robson Ext 7129, Kelly Webb Ext 7474

Recommendation to People and Places Advisory Committee

- a) To receive and note report.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Community empowerment has been recognised as crucial in Sevenoaks District and it is our belief that a more empowered community will be a more cohesive community. There is a strong need and appetite to ensure that the Council is effectively engaging and working with residents, communities and businesses across the district to achieve better outcomes for all.
- 2 Empowering residents and increasing equality and inclusion can boost community cohesion - as well as keep communities resilient in tough times. For example, despite the challenges brought on by Covid-19, the District's communities remained resilient, with more than 1,500 resident volunteers, including Sevenoaks District Council, town and parish councils, supporting a network of support to provide and deliver food, collect medicine, undertake basic errands and provide befriending support. This not only resulted in people getting the support they needed; it also made people feel cared for and looked after. During lockdown, we saw a resilient, engaged and innovative community, who initiated their own community-led approaches to supporting one another's wellbeing, and we have seen positive collaboration with voluntary and community organisations.
- 3 Community empowerment is about ensuring that individuals and communities are equipped, informed, skilled and confident in their abilities

to define, by themselves, their priorities, agendas and ultimately any actions they may wish to put in place.

- 4 It is proposed to develop a Community Planning and Empowerment Toolkit with guiding principles to enable and development an empowered Sevenoaks District community, which will help develop a new relationship between public services, local elected members and the wider community. This relationship will build on existing successes and will take the way we work together to another level. This framework will be designed to help shape the new relationship between the district's stakeholders. It is not a prescriptive model, rather a series of steps and examples of good practice that can help us all achieve our aims and aspirations together.
- 5 The toolkit will help support a long term, ongoing process of planning, which will provide opportunities for community and voluntary groups and the Council to work more closely together in ensuring that the needs of communities are recognised, understood and addressed.

Key Implications

Resource (non financial)

None.

Financial

None.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

None.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusion

The report provides an overview of Community Empowerment and sets out the development of a Community Planning and Empowerment Toolkit which will provide a framework for developing and building community capacity.

Appendices

None

Background paper

None