



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



## Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16 March 2023

Report of Councillor Annie Mason,  
Cabinet Member for People and Safer  
Communities

# Development of a Communities Strategy

### Report Author

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### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is for Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the development of a new Communities Strategy exploring opportunities for engagement and development with the voluntary and community sector of South Kesteven.

### Recommendations

**It is recommended Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1. Considers the key themes and objectives suggested for inclusion in a Communities Strategy and suggests enhancements to the extent and clarity of information for consideration and inclusion.**
- 2. Endorses the commencement of a consultation exercise and the subsequent development of a Communities Strategy for the District.**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

- Healthy and strong communities
- High performing Council

Which wards are impacted? All

## 1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance and Procurement***

- 1.1 Any financial implications arising from this report will be met from existing budgets where necessary.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

### ***Diversity and Inclusion***

- 1.3 South Kesteven's increasingly diverse communities are at the heart of the development of a Communities Strategy. In order to be equitable and inclusive in this process, early consultation with the voluntary, community, military and faith sectors will be undertaken to ensure the voice of the community is heard and included.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager.

## 2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) recognises the importance of the network of voluntary and community groups within South Kesteven and is appreciative of their contribution and commitment to local society. This is acknowledged in the Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2023) in its key objectives to:
- work effectively with partners in the voluntary, private, and public sectors for the benefit of communities, and
  - make best use of different funding sources to support the voluntary and community sector within the District.
- 2.2 The Council's commitment to continue to work with communities was further bolstered during the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in November 2021. The subsequent Feedback Report led to an Action Plan being developed to address the recommendations made.
- 2.3 Recommendation 8 of the report concentrated on the Council's work with communities and stated we should "*...continue to deepen understanding of, and engagement with, communities and other partners to strengthen SKDC's community leadership role. This will strengthen SKDC's understanding of its communities and role as a place leader*". (see **Background Papers** section).
- 2.4 To fulfil the Council's commitment and focus the approach of the Community Engagement Team going forward, it is proposed a communities strategy be developed. This strategy will encompass both community engagement and community development, and will consider the three key identifiers relating to community:
- **Community of Place**  
Where we live – a town, village, neighbourhood
  - **Community of Interest**  
What we're involved in - sports, arts, hobbies
  - **Community of Identity**  
What makes us who we are – culture, faith, history, perspective
- 2.5 Community engagement is typified by active participation with local residents and community groups in the decisions that affect their lives. Successful engagement at grassroots level opens the door to development opportunities, helps build relationships and fosters goodwill. Community development is the process that builds on the Community engagement. Some communities are already self-mobilising and will proactively seek out available support available to them from

third-sector, public sector and business to achieve their goals, while others will benefit from assistance and signposting.

- 2.6 South Kesteven District Council already has a good relationship with the voluntary and community sector within the District. Work has been ongoing for many years to support community groups both financially, through such interventions as the SK Community Fund and LotterySK and responsive support for groups in relation to governance, funding searches, assistance with bid writing etc.
- 2.7 With regard to engagement with our serving and ex-military communities, the Council's signature to the Armed Forces Covenant and its Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme carries a responsibility to actively engage and advocate engagement from others. Our commitment to our Armed Forces communities needs to be reflected within the strategy.
- 2.8 Developing and implementing a Communities Strategy for the Council will identify and record what is already being undertaken and will identify further opportunities for Community Engagement to be embedded within the Council. This will provide:
- An avenue for other service areas to engage effectively with communities
  - Opportunities to reach broader demographics to establish ongoing dialogue with under-represented residents and stakeholders
  - Exploration of the use of different methods of civic engagement to increase inclusivity
  - Options to gain local insights and to help communities help themselves through development opportunities
- 2.9 The proposed guiding principles for the Communities Strategy will be:
- Partnerships
  - Inclusion
  - Place-based community development
  - Sustainability
- 2.10 A vital element in the process of developing and implementing this strategy will be community consultation. The Council's role in community engagement and community development is not to tell communities what they must do, rather to support and advise in the delivery of what they want and where they want it. The process must be inclusive and accessible and will take the form of an online survey and face-to-face engagement events. The engagement events are intended to be a mix of in-person workshops and virtual meetings for those not able to attend a physical event.
- 2.11 Table 1 provides suggested objectives for inclusion in the Communities Strategy. Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider these objectives and suggest any further topics for inclusion.

<b>Table 1: Suggested Objectives for inclusion in the Communities Strategy</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>How this will be achieved</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Building the capacity of communities to help them help themselves</b>	Working with the voluntary and community groups within our District to enable them to participate in, and deliver, community-based projects and activities	Provide support for groups to develop governance structures, create project plans, identify and source funding and build resilience and sustainability into what they do
<b>Addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities</b>	Working with communities within locations of health and social inequality to enable those within those communities to feel empowered to improve place and personal outcomes	Signposting communities to seek the support of relevant agencies to address issues faced within disadvantaged areas
<b>Fostering mutual support within communities</b>	Assisting communities to develop, support and communicate with groups and agencies delivering projects and services in their local area	Develop network opportunities for people to come together to discuss local needs with an aim of creating collaborative projects
<b>Enhancing cohesion</b>	Foster good relations between communities to improve understanding and cooperation among people from diverse backgrounds	Collaborate with existing providers of support and celebratory events to enhance opportunities to bring people together to explore their differences and similarities

2.12 Should the proposal for its development be accepted, a draft of the Communities Strategy will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee. Officers will engage with the voluntary, community, faith and military sectors, stakeholders, and Members of this Committee to ensure the resulting strategy meets the requirements of the community and the Council's vision and priorities.

### **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1 Consideration must be given to the vast knowledge and experience of the voluntary and community sector within the district. Their efforts provide practical support to those in need, cultural and celebratory opportunities, activities to combat loneliness, social and rural isolation, community space and environmental projects - across South Kesteven.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 The Council has pledged to continue deepening its understanding of, and engagement with, communities. It could continue to operate without a Communities Strategy. Developing and implementing such a strategy however, would show its commitment to the improvement of community engagement and community development within the District. Therefore the 'do nothing' option has been discounted.

### **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 5.1 To allow opportunities for Elected Members and the voluntary, community, faith, and military sectors to input into the development of a Communities Strategy.
- 5.2. To gain the endorsement of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to create a Communities Strategy for the District.

### **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 Consultation will take place with the voluntary, community faith and military sector once endorsement to begin the process to develop the strategy has been given.

### **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 *Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge*, Report to Cabinet, Published 29 March 2022, Agenda Item 7 - available online at: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 29/03/2022 14:00 \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)