

Stronger Together

Cambridgeshire County Council's
Strategy for Building Resilient Communities

October 2015

Contents

Our vision for building resilient communities	3
The context – Cambridgeshire County Council’s whole Council business planning	3
Building Resilient Communities: Success factors	4
The drivers for change	4
The evidence base	5
Communication	7
People helping people	8
Council Members	11
Our workforce	13
Community spaces	16
Partnerships	18
Risk	20
Financial benefits	20

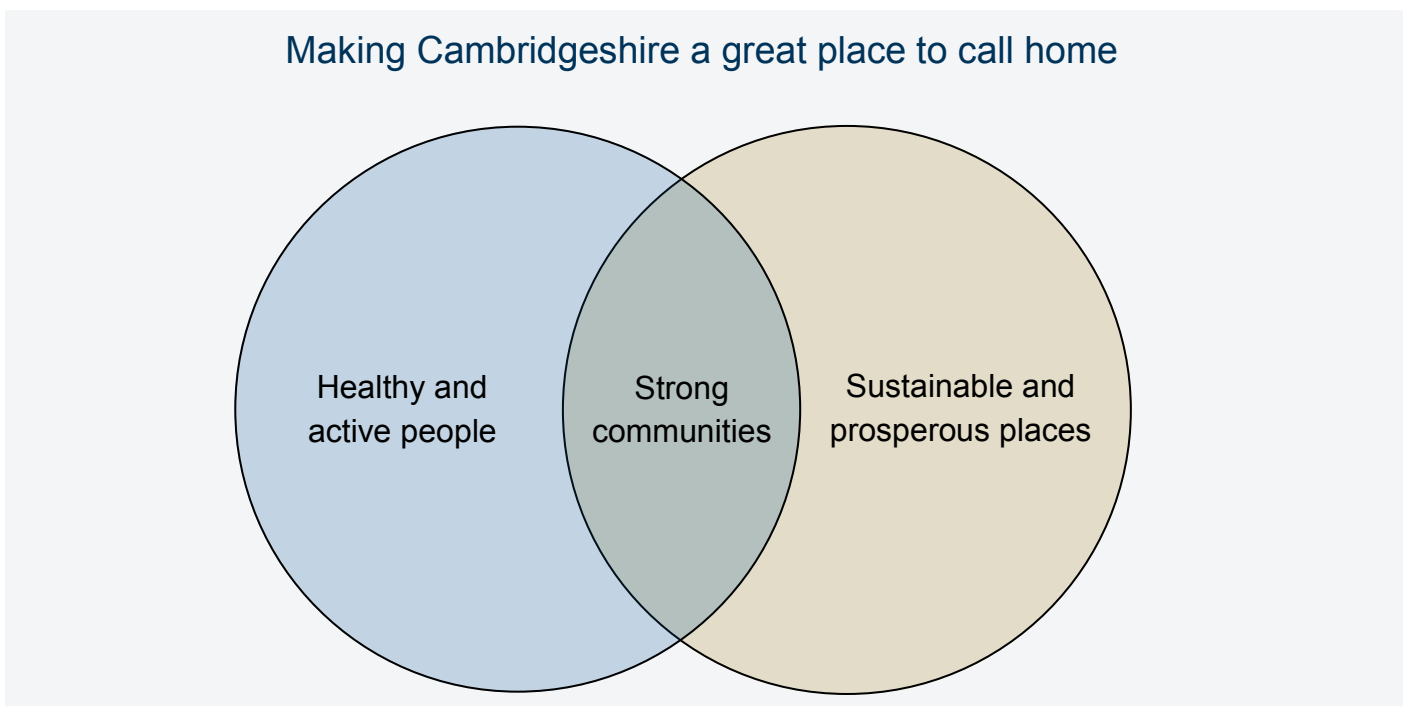
Our vision for building resilient communities

We have a vision for a stronger future for our communities where strengths are recognised and where people can easily find the information and advice they need to be happy and healthy citizens. Cambridgeshire will be a place where people are part of well-networked communities, and where they get the right help to play an active role within their neighbourhoods.

The context – Cambridgeshire County Council’s whole Council business planning

Our vision is set within the wider context of change in our approach to business planning across the County Council. We are moving from an incremental year on year approach to business planning, focused on specific services, to a longer term outcome led approach to planning for the whole council. As pressure on resources continues across the public sector the challenge of providing effective public services in the midst of increasing demand and growing customer expectations requires new approaches and new thinking.

The Council’s vision for its future planning is:



Having strong communities at the heart of this vision is paramount.

It is worth stating that a community is not only defined by a local geographical area (a “community of place”). Communities include families and wider networks, and “communities of interest” – people who define themselves as part of a group with an interest or a characteristic in common.

Building Resilient Communities: Success factors

If we are successful in building communities we expect to see the following:

- ▶ The numbers of people requiring our services will be reduced;
- ▶ Where people do need help from us, this help is planned jointly with the local community so that support is seamless and the support that we provide directly is minimised;
- ▶ Local communities provide an effective step down resource following more intensive help from Council services;
- ▶ People playing an active role in services, those who have benefitted from our services will offer their own help to others;
- ▶ People will be better placed to help themselves and each other so that those who need a little extra support can find this from within their local community;
- ▶ People can support themselves, through a better use of digital technology or through community networks while some services withdraw;
- ▶ The extent to which an action supports community resilience plays a key part in decisions on Council policy and practice.

We will wherever possible establish measurable success factors so that we can clearly evidence what works in local areas.

The drivers for change

All public sector organisations face enormous challenges in the next few years. Rising demand together with significantly reduced resources will make redesigning public services imperative. Services will increasingly need to become more targeted and capacity will continue to be more stretched. There will need to be fewer services delivered directly by public bodies, to fewer people. In fact, service provision as we know it will need to change radically – the County Council and the wider public sector will look very different in five years' time.

This means that there is a real imperative to work alongside local people to facilitate local community action that helps to mitigate any increasing vulnerability or rising need in their community.

We are not starting from zero. Much work is already happening across the Council as part of our drive to improve the way we work, and to build our business plans for the future. For example, we have begun redesigning our Adult Social Care workforce to build a stronger focus on families and communities, and we have a new Libraries Strategy which is clear about the role of local libraries in building more resilient and supportive communities.

This approach extends to communities taking a more active role in managing their local environment. Already, a number of communities, with help from the Council, have taken the lead on a range of initiatives such as establishing local green spaces, managing nature reserves and implementing village speed limits. Our Local Highway Improvement Initiative has been a huge success, with communities identifying and part-funding improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, whilst the Parish Paths Partnerships, where local people take an active part in looking after and developing new paths, have helped improve local access to the countryside, which in turn contributes to healthy lifestyles.

The drivers for change...

The Council has to prioritise its funding for looking after the County's infrastructure where there is greatest need. For example, we have introduced an asset management strategy for the road network, to ensure every penny spent is effective use of money. However, this means that we will not be able to meet every community's expectations. We will, however, seek to support communities that are prepared to take initiatives. For example, working with other public bodies, such as the police and district councils, we are able to provide support to implement Speedwatch schemes run by local people, and help with No Cold-Calling Zones to address problems with nuisance callers.

Our key focus must be on managing demand for our high cost services. As a Council, we recognise the need to make sure that people are better placed to help themselves and each other, so that when extra support is needed this can be found within their local communities. Our efforts to support strong communities will aim to focus on preventative actions which can help to keep people away from needing services delivered by the Council, recognising that very often the best and most sustainable help comes from neighbours and peers.

The Council has an increased focus on a strengths-based approach – for individuals and for communities. This means that we will look first at the strengths within people's lives – their family and community networks, their interests and their abilities, in order to link people with the right sources of support and help which build upon these strengths. Communities that are more connected need fewer public services, create good places to live, and improve outcomes for residents. People are not passive recipients of services – they have an active role to play in creating better outcomes for themselves and for others, and they themselves will be the starting point for tackling emerging issues.

We will work towards having '***more open public services that have the mobilisation of people as their core organising principle***'. (Clarence and Gabriel – Nesta 2014). This means that our services will have a real focus on building the willingness and capacity of local people to help others and to input to their local area. In doing this, we reposition the Council as part of the wider community, providing only those services that local people cannot do for themselves, and facilitating the capacity of local people to meet local needs for themselves.

This significant shift in the way that we deliver services requires political and executive leadership, and a workforce that is able to change and adapt to very different ways of working. As such, community resilience is a key enabler in our new operating model.

The evidence base

From national and local work, we have a wealth of evidence about what works in building strong resilient communities and helping to manage demand for high-cost Council services. This helps us to begin to reset the relationship between local government and local communities, providing evidence about where and how local communities work best.

The evidence which drives what we do:

- ▶ **Professionals with a problem-solving brief will tend to see and respond to problems** – our workforce of the future will need to be able to provide the short-term intensive support that some vulnerable people will need, but also be able to nurture the sparks of local community support within the communities in which they work. ⁱ
- ▶ **When people help other people it creates stronger communities and higher levels of social capital** – with all of the associated economic, social and health and wellbeing benefits that brings. ⁱⁱ
- ▶ **Relying on needs assessments to understand a community perpetuates a focus on needs from the perspective of services we provide** – this can miss identifying the strengths and assets that communities can bring to solve collective problems. ⁱⁱⁱ

The evidence which drives how we work:

- ▶ **Professionals are not necessarily the best people to deliver services** – research shows that in many cases trained peer supporters are much better placed to deliver some services. ^{iv}
- ▶ **Community leadership from our elected councillors** – can help to create a climate for better engagement and a more honest conversation with local communities. ^v
- ▶ **Alternative governance arrangements, like cooperatives and mutual** – can give communities the opportunity to design and run their own services, creating greater ownership and take up. ^{vi}
- ▶ **The role of the public sector is changing, and with that the role of the professional within it** – we need to build our role in providing the platform for social connection rather than simply providing a direct service in response to need. ^{vii}
- ▶ **Local people identify with where they live and have a natural interest in being part of a strong community** – so there is an opportunity to tap into this in order to generate behaviour change and a greater sense of responsibility for community wellbeing. ^{viii}
- ▶ **Engaging the community in co-designing and commissioning services** – is the best way to achieve long-term transformative change alongside more resilient communities. ^{ix}

The evidence which drives where we work:

- ▶ **Community-led community spaces provide the critical link between families who would not traditionally use children's services and link volunteers with vulnerable adults** – where there is light touch peer support to help them at home and easy connections to other sources of support. ^x

Areas of focus

If we are to be successful in achieving this fundamental shift of emphasis – from a focus on need and service provision to a focus on mobilising the energies and strengths within communities – we need to articulate the framework within which decisions and actions will be taken across the whole of the Council. Our framework for community resilience will focus on these key areas:

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ People helping people
- ▶ Council Members
- ▶ Our workforce
- ▶ Community spaces
- ▶ Partnerships.

Communication

We do not underestimate the scale of the challenges we face. Success will depend upon a cultural shift within our local communities, away from an “entitlement culture” – the expectation of public services as delivery agents meeting the needs of local people – towards an understanding of everyone “doing their bit”, with local citizens as active co-deliverers and co-designers of provision in their local community.

We need to get the message right in order to achieve this. The Council will initiate an honest conversation with the public about the reality of future public service provision and the role of the local community in the future. Within this conversation, we need to work with the community to find out what they might be able to do without our help, and how we can work better alongside local people, local groups and local community assets. We will work to reposition the Council as part of the local community – one organisation of many locally who work together for local people.

We will improve the way we gather local communication, knowledge and information so that information on very local activities and support are accessible in very local areas, for example, through community hubs. Community hubs will have a vital role in this local intelligence gathering and asset mapping, and provide the key contact for local service providers and local people to find out about local community activity.

We aim to have achieved the following by 2020:

A fundamental shift in the way that our service provision and local communities interact, with Council and local people working together to help those who are more vulnerable.

A clear understanding and agreement on provision which needs to be led by the public sector, provision that could be led by local communities, for example by parish councils, and provision that we can do together.

A shared understanding of what works to promote and facilitate community self-help and community action, building on successful local practice and a growing national evidence-base.

Easy access to up-to-date information on local community activity – for our own staff and for local people.

Local people understand and can input to their neighbourhood, and know where to go for help if they want to find out how to form a community group or apply for funding. The Council actively supports and facilitates community action.

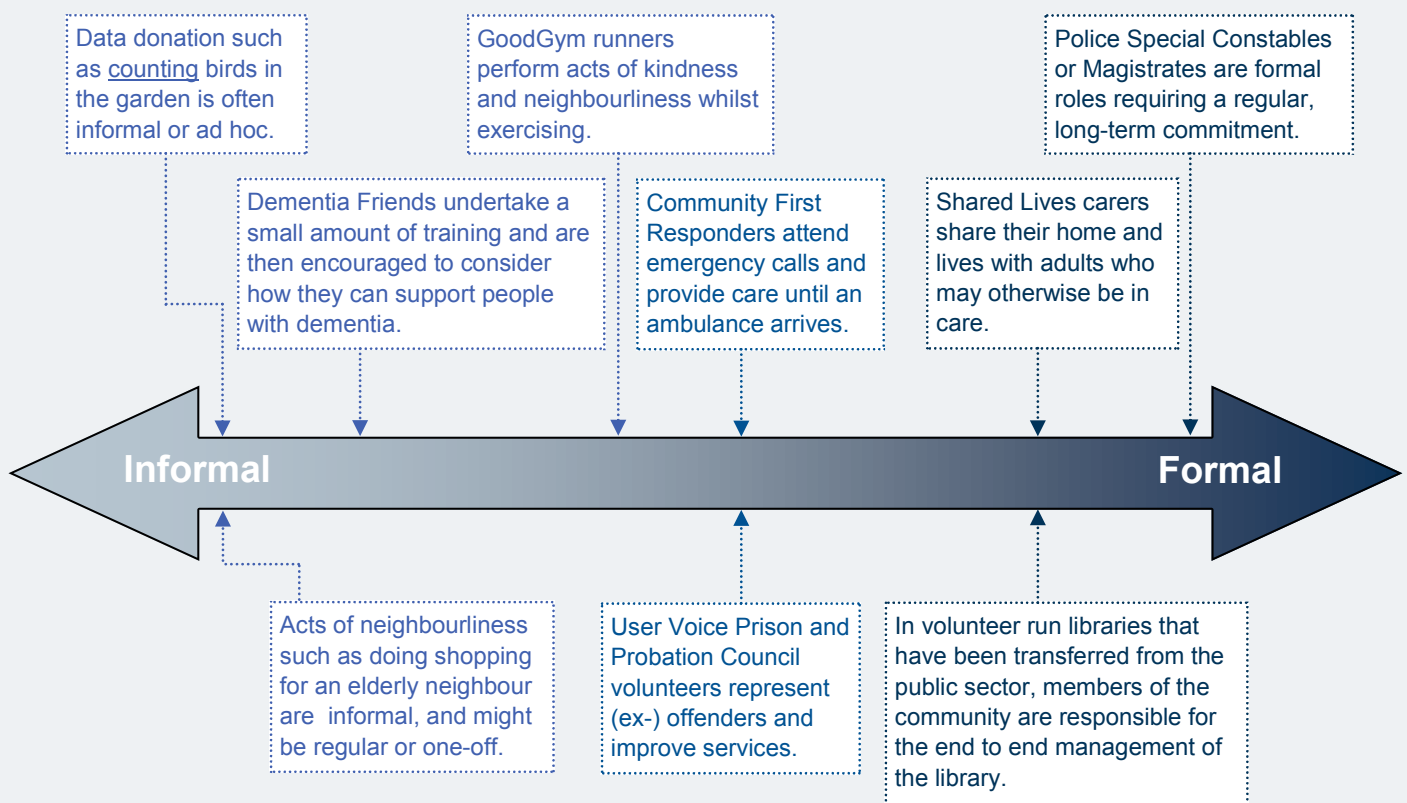
People helping people

Research shows us that professionals are not always the right people to provide help and support. Help from local community peers, with a clear mechanism for their support and training, can be far more effective in reaching people who may begin to need help but who do not come forward to ask for help from professional services. We will make sure that our own services are more systematic in identifying, supporting and deploying peer supporters.

There are already very many people who volunteer their time to help others, both in more formal capacities, or informally at very local levels. Many of our services recruit, support and deploy local volunteers, and we will get better at coordinating these volunteering opportunities and building upon and celebrating their success.

Mobilising citizens: the spectrum of social action

Volunteering, giving, neighbourliness, reciprocity, pro-social behaviour, people-powered public services: what underpins the myriad of such terms is the simple idea of people helping people, of individuals freely taking action to benefit others.



(Nesta 2014)

People helping people...

We recognise the inherent strengths within communities, and we want to provide the right environment for local community groups to thrive. These small, locally-driven groups are often better at meeting the needs of their own communities, and are able to lever other sources of support and funding to add value to their offer. Equally, community leaders exist in all communities, and where these leaders have plans to build community action and community support, we will help them to do so.

We will provide information and advice to help local people to establish local activity, for example, through developing an online toolkit giving advice on sources of funding, support and training that community groups can access, and through opening up our own buildings to local community groups so that they can work alongside us.

We want to build community strengths including:

- ▶ the skills, knowledge and connections of local residents
- ▶ the collective power of local informal associations and clubs
- ▶ the collective resources of public, private and non-profit institutions
- ▶ the physical and economic resources of local places
- ▶ the shared stories, culture and heritage of communities.

We aim to have achieved the following by 2020:

A defined role for some of our frontline workforce about identifying and nurturing peer support and intergenerational support – recruiting and deploying a team of peer or intergenerational supporters drawn from those who have successfully overcome problems or vulnerabilities themselves. This is explicit in job descriptions.

Parent, young people or older people peer supporters are identified, trained and nurtured so that people with emerging or additional needs can access the early help and support they need from people that they trust, thus preventing escalation to higher cost services.

Online communities are supported and developed to facilitate people helping others without the need for Council intervention, for example, through the development of “virtual school gates” – online forum for parents in a school catchment area – so that parents can help and advise each other.

New governance arrangements or informal community leadership are actively supported where appropriate, to give communities the opportunity to design and run their own services so that they can better meet the needs of their own communities.

A clear role for managers in identifying, creating or commissioning the opportunities for need to be met within communities, and managing volunteer resources and local community-facing budgets.

Further investment in community-based support where there is evidence that this reduces direct service delivery costs, e.g. community navigators, foster care for older people and different ways of meeting the needs of people needing home care.

Little Miracles – Parents helping parents

Little Miracles' story is one of people coming together to make things happen for families with children with additional needs and disabilities

The group came together after founders Michelle and Tessa met on a bus. Michelle said: *'The bus driver refused to take my son, who was born with Down's Syndrome, on the bus because of his oxygen. I refused to get off the bus, I was so demoralised that I sat down in the aisle and cried. Fortunately, Tessa was on the bus. She was also a mum of a child with Down's Syndrome and she took me out for a coffee. It was amazing to share experiences with someone who had gone through the same struggles.'*

Michelle and Tessa got on so well that they continued meeting for coffee regularly. Tessa invited a few more parents and before they knew it they had an informal support group and started running activities that parents asked for. It went from strength to strength and outgrew various venues until they were given a disused Council building and DIY SOS created a purpose-built centre for us in Peterborough.

Since then Little Miracles has supported parents to set up branches in Ely and Ramsey (supporting around 200 and 80 families respectively) and more recently in St Neots. Each branch looks very different, based on what parents need, but all provide a range of free activities, training, drop-ins and trips, as well as training peer supporters in bereavement support, benefits advice, counselling and how to refer to other organisations.

Michelle added: *"The informality is really valued. It's really important to us that there's no difference between parents and volunteers, and we all support each other. All our staff have additional needs themselves or have children with special needs. Our trustees are always parents. We recruit great professionals to our advisory boards, but it's the parents that make all the decisions. This way means that we've got an amazing panel of experts to support us, but our users are empowered to make all the decisions for themselves, so that what we offer really reflects what families want."*¹

¹ Full case studies available from: community@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Council Members

Our Councillors are important to these changes. Members will have a proactive role to play as community leaders within the local communities in their own divisions. Members can create a climate for better engagement between public sector, voluntary sector and community leaders, providing the “glue” locally to bring activity together and playing a critical part in the conversation that needs to happen between the Council and local communities. They know the enablers and community leaders locally and can help to ensure that these community enablers have the right help and support to be successful in their activities.

Members have two key roles to play in developing stronger and more resilient local communities:

1. **Community engagement** – Members facilitate the flow of information and intelligence between local communities and the Council, both in identifying the issues and opportunities within their divisions, and in providing the intelligence local communities need in order to get involved. Councillors will also need to engage with and represent their communities with other organisations such as NHS Trusts, Police services, Jobcentre Plus, and others. In developing this role, it will be crucial to ensure that the expectations of communities are managed effectively.
2. **A community advocate** – nationally, policy makers are highlighting the role for elected members in identifying the needs, wants and assets in the communities they represent, both in terms of vulnerable people and in terms of agencies working in the local area. Members can then act as a conduit between community groups and public services to build real grassroots partnerships to meet the local identified need.

We aim to have achieved the following by 2020:

Councillors have a clear understanding of the features of resilient communities, and understand their key role in supporting this.

Councillors play a lead role in communities co-designing and co-delivering support needed locally.

Local councillors champion community-based provision, proactively linking parish, district, county and community services around a defined understanding of the strengths and needs locally. They identify key people within communities and seek local solutions to be delivered by local people.

Somersham Health and Wellbeing Group – a Member's Perspective

About four years ago I volunteered to pilot a new approach to local community involvement in my patch. Being a parish councillor and also a district councillor helped me to sell the idea of piloting this to the Parish Council.

We encouraged people to contribute their ideas for a local plan, through public events where people used photographs to show what they liked and disliked in their community. The resulting exhibition encouraged more comments and I added some key issues myself that professionals were identifying but weren't necessarily obvious to local people attending, such as childhood obesity and helping older people.

We then set up a Timebank, and the Parish Council agreed to employ a co-ordinator. That has made it easy to swap skills and resources. If someone has a big event, they are able to borrow chairs from the church or village hall. When the football club holds a tournament, marshals with hi-vis jackets are provided by the Christmas Lights working party. As people took advantage of the benefits, they were starting to be better connected. Seeing how that worked made it clear to me that we could do more to work together locally to increase our resilience.

There was no forum for people to exchange knowledge and ideas. Many of those working in the community did not know of each other's existence, let alone contact details. This made it difficult to deliver the actions identified in our Community Plan – in particular around childhood obesity and supporting older people. Health providers and commissioners made encouraging noises, but it was not within anyone's remit to take this forward. It was clear if I wanted it to happen I just had to get on with it myself.

So I set up a very local health and wellbeing group for my Division and invited local practitioners, service providers, volunteers etc. I wasn't sure if people would show up – but nearly two years later, they are still showing up and the group has grown and now includes the Clinical Commissioning Group. We've been able to do some asset mapping together – looking at everything that is available in our communities, all the positive energy of people and all the knowledge and resources that we could all draw on.

It's really important that a group like this is not a talking shop. We always make sure we take actions away. We meet every four months, and now people know who's working locally and how to get in touch between meetings, they work on things together much more. The local practice nurse has been so impressed that she's set up a similar group in Warboys.

The thing is, nobody told me what was needed – being a proactive councillor involves identifying needs and opportunities. If you're really linked in to your community then you'll be able to work out what's missing and help put it in place – you have a license to take the initiative because that's why you were elected. If we think about it, the whole point of elected councillors is that they increase the resilience of the system. If we restrict our activity to being reactive, solving problems as and when presented, we are just preserving the status quo. We all know that is no longer an option. If we want our communities to change to cope with the challenges ahead, we need to act as catalysts for that change.

Our workforce

Through our recruitment practices and through training and development, we will build a workforce that is equipped with the skills needed for new ways of working – skills which include:

- ▶ the ability to build networks and relationships, empathetic
- ▶ the ability to motivate and potentially manage volunteers
- ▶ the ability to innovate to develop local solutions
- ▶ managers who are enabling and not process-driven
- ▶ solutions-focused
- ▶ good communicators and facilitators
- ▶ flexibility and adaptable to change.

We need to reposition our workforce across the whole of the Council so that practice is built on a strengths-based approach, building on the strengths of each individual and their networks and neighbourhoods, rather than a focus on deficits and needs. This will mean redefining roles and responsibilities both for frontline practitioners and for management roles.

We know that this will need significant workforce development and culture change. Our staff are trained and experienced in delivering services to people in need, and a move towards community development and community resilience will entail a very different way of thinking and working for some. Currently, the system tends to wait for people to fall into crisis, then assesses people in terms of their deficits (defining people by what they cannot do) and then provides professional services to meet deficits that have been further re-defined in terms of the service provision available. Frontline staff and their managers will need support and training in order to focus their work in very different ways – ways which build on prevention and community support rather than crisis intervention and public services.

We also know that community volunteers will need to be properly trained and supported in order to carry out their roles safely and effectively. We will therefore look to expand our workforce development opportunities to include our role in identifying, encouraging or supporting people we work with to give back to help others. We will want to explore how we can develop role generosity in some areas to facilitate and support good early intervention across age groups.

We recognise that communities are intergenerational – and yet we tend to segment our services by the age of those needing help. We will take steps where possible towards a workforce that works locally, across age groups, to better reflect how local communities best thrive. In doing this, we will make explicit the role of each frontline practitioner as the “first point of contact” for people who need some help, and make sure that our workforce is equipped with the materials and information that they need to link people into their local communities. We will be clear about the skills that we will need in a workforce which focuses across age groups and networks.

We aim to have achieved the following by 2020:

Good working relations between local public sector and voluntary sector staff, through workforce development, shared workspaces and joint roles across organisations.

A workforce which has at its heart the attributes needed to work across sectors and organisations, seeking solutions and innovating to involve local communities.

A relationship-based “community first” approach to frontline work which links more vulnerable people with sources of help from within their own networks and neighbourhoods, instead of defining support as either commissioned or provided directly by our own staff. Our interventions leave people more connected with their community.

Refocused roles across our workforce which clarify their role in developing community resilience, and build in an intergenerational approach to frontline work. The development of Think Family – or equivalent Think Community.

Close relationships between the voluntary and community sector groups, local community leaders and organisers, local businesses and our own workforce. Community and voluntary groups understand our role in relation to what they do and what we can offer (e.g. space, training, expertise) and how and when to contact us.

New ways of working to connect people and their community

Ben is a young adult on the Autistic Spectrum who had really struggled to engage in activities. He has support from Adult Social Care, and is also being seen by probation services as he's previously been charged with assault.

Ben has been attending a Learning Disability setting, and would normally have one to one support and close supervision because of his difficulties and his criminal record. Ben's workers would not have felt confident or able to suggest that he could take part in a mainstream activity. However, staff in Adult Social Care are being encouraged to innovate and to seek local solutions for their clients rather than relying on the more traditional care package. So when staff heard about a volunteer gardening group through the local Volunteer Centre they felt able to suggest that this might be something Ben would want to get involved in.

With Ben's consent, workers shared the risk assessment with the gardening group and the group were completely unfazed. They already worked with people who were out of work and had a criminal record; they were confident that Ben would be able to participate safely.

Traditional Learning Disability services would not have been able to provide the same experience to Ben. Allowing him access to sharp tools may have been seen as too risky, particularly as there would be vulnerable and physically fragile service users around. There would be more staff around and less possibility of independence. At the gardening project, it's a completely different atmosphere. Ben has a task he needs to achieve, and he responds positively to his independence.

As well as the gardening project Ben is now much better able to access his local library. The staff in the library have all had autism training, and training was also offered to the local Costa Coffee he likes to go to. Costa were really happy to engage, and took a phone number in case there was an incident – but said they didn't need any training to be welcoming, supportive and accepting of Ben.

In the last six months, Ben has had no further police involvement. He's shown himself that there's a wider world, and he can access meaningful activities outside Learning Disability services. The most important change enabling staff to help Ben more effectively was being encouraged to think differently about risk, to share information more freely and to focus on finding local solutions rather than following set processes.

Community spaces

We want to work locally, in local areas which are accessible to local people. We will aim to work from buildings that are shared spaces used by our own teams alongside Partners, voluntary sector organisations and community groups. This will build more collaborative working and help to blur the line between council and wider community support.

Through our work in new and growing communities, we have developed a set of principles for establishing community hubs to provide the catalyst for community development and to encourage community resilience. We will build upon these principles to develop a network of community spaces across the county. This model will enable us to rationalise the use of our buildings, using very local knowledge to identify spaces which communities use most, and also will help to build the links between local public and voluntary sector organisations, local businesses and local people.

We will network best within local communities in buildings which are already well used by local people. This may be a building currently run by the Council, e.g. a library or children's centre, but may equally be a community centre or village hall. We will support the development of a network of spaces, services and activities in an area around this central hub – providing the opportunity for local service providers and local people to work together through this network to identify and respond to local issues. This network will be key to recruiting, supporting and deploying volunteers within local areas, and will link vulnerable or isolated people into sources of community support.

This means that we will rationalise the use of our buildings across our Council services and with Partners. Alongside our own service provision, we will ensure where possible that local community groups can share our space and work alongside us to provide services for local communities. There will be occasions where our buildings are deemed surplus to requirements, and decisions will need to be made about the future use of these buildings.

Our buildings are public assets. They need to function in a way that has the most value for Cambridgeshire. There is a balance to be struck between the social value which a property asset can help to generate, and the financial value which an asset can release to support the Council's delivery of services or investment in alternative community resilience initiatives across the county. Financial value cannot be discounted merely because an asset can be put to a local community, charitable or 'not for profit' use.

We will make decisions on the future of our buildings based upon a set of clear principles which incorporate the drive to develop resilient communities, ensuring that there are sound social and financial bases to our decisions.

The Council has others assets too which need to be used in ways which make most sense and bring the most value for Cambridgeshire residents. For example, we have mobile facilities such as mobile libraries. We recognise that we need to improve the way that we use these assets to support resilience within communities.

We aim to have achieved the following by 2020:

A network of community spaces which are the first port of call for the local community (see appendix), rationalising the use of existing buildings such as libraries and children's centres, and joining with Partners where possible around local community spaces.

Agreed criteria by which disposal, continued use or asset transfer at nil cost will be appropriate where County Council assets are not required for County Council operational use.

A clear set of policy statements (community asset transfer, community right-to-buy, reducing capital liabilities, land disposal) to guide decision making for our councillors and for potential providers

Further exploration of the use of our wider assets to better support community resilience.

Vir2oso taps into talented town

Vir2oso is the brainchild of Tracey, a social entrepreneur who has discovered that St Neots has got talent. Her story is one which shows how real energy can be unleashed if encouraged and developed unhindered.

Vir2oso was born out of frustration, with Tracey finding that there were no affordable arts opportunities locally for her two sons and other kids.

Rather than sticking her head in the sand, she decided to use the power of social networking and soon found out there were like-minded people locally on Facebook who felt the same way and were willing to give a helping hand and volunteer.

Then things really started to happen. She started working with the Children's Services Locality Team who offered her some space at the Bargroves Centre. This meant she now had a base to run arts activities and clubs for local kids, allowing them to explore their creativity and develop their confidence with volunteers on hand to help. She also has a market stall and recently got funding for an arts caravan where people can come along on market days and have a go.

The relationship with the Locality Team is a true partnership – they can support her to explore new ideas and have trained Vir2oso volunteers in youth work. In return, Tracey supports their work and Vir2oso runs youth activities that the Locality Team can no longer provide. She says that more opportunities for local decision making would be amazing, so if people who know the area think something would be useful, they are empowered just to say yes!

Partnerships

This strategy focuses for now on the role of the County Council in relation to community resilience, as well as the role of LGSS (Local Government Shared Services) particularly in terms of community spaces and workforce strategy.

However, the relationship between local authorities, NHS, police and housing providers needs to be more fluid. Statutory and voluntary sectors including faith-based organisations need to create better forums for sharing insight and jointly building platforms for commissioning and delivering services.

There is also an opportunity for public agencies to think about the contribution that can be made by the private sector and the ways that businesses can work in partnership with local authorities, not just as service deliverers but also as corporate citizens. The future sustainability of our local communities will depend upon the extent to which communities can become more economically and socially productive – and how effective public agencies are in supporting this.

We recognise therefore that a strategy to build resilient communities cannot function in isolation. Hence this strategy will be further developed and delivered in partnership with other community stakeholders, in the public, voluntary and business sectors.

We aim to have achieved the following by 2020:

Businesses are engaged with their local area as corporate citizens.

There is an agreed set of working practices and processes in working with local health services (e.g. midwives, health visitors, district nurses and GPs) so that when they identify potential vulnerabilities (e.g. older people becoming frailer, pregnant women who may struggle with motherhood), there is a system to link these people with sources of local support.

Voluntary sector organisations and adult learning providers work closely with us in our aims to build community capacity.

A broader partnership strategy or agreement to build community resilience which builds on the commitments from the Council.

Godmanchester Baptist Church

We run a group for carers and toddlers on Wednesday morning. There's crafts, singing and we usually end with a story. About 60 families attend. There's very high use by the Polish and Hungarian communities – having a big, integrated group means that they can get help with translation if they need it, but also that it's possible to just chat and socialise in their own language. There's loads of signposting and informal support that goes on during this session, both from volunteers and also between the parents who attend. One of the parents is a National Childbirth Trust rep, there's often breastfeeding support or second hand clothes for sale, and we're in talks with the local library about starting to run a micro-library. But more importantly than any of that, it's so valuable for parents with young children just to have another adult to talk to. People really value the relaxed atmosphere, we have tea and coffee and parents are able to socialise.

We also run a children's club for ages 7-11, with games, craft activities. At the same time we run a coffee area for parents to be able to relax and chat while children play independently. This is somewhere that very supportive conversations take place – for example, a lot of our families share their experiences of long term separation from dads who may be working abroad, serving with the army, or otherwise absent. This is a peer support network that has just formed naturally.

When the local children's centre first started up, no one seemed to see provision for children and families as a partnership, as component parts of the local provision for families. The children's centre started running groups at the same times as another local community parenting group, which as a result almost had to close. We were able to give them some support to keep running which was fortunate because after a little while the children's centre had its funding reduced and could no longer provide those groups. So if the original community group had gone under there wouldn't have been any provision!

When the local children's centre first set up, we had very little contact with them. Better communication will help the children's centre to know that our group is a good place to refer Polish-speaking parents who might be isolated. We also offer peer support for parenting skills. On the other hand, we don't have many young mums who access our service, so we know there's a gap in provision – so that's something the children's centre will need to focus on.

Our relationship with the children's centre is forming now, and we are really hopeful that by improving our communication we can improve what we offer to local families. We know that we can all achieve far more for our local families if we work in partnership.

Risk

By 2020, the Council will have reviewed and revised its appetite for risk across the organisation so that we have built in a greater level of trust in community action. This will have driven a change in the management working practices and frontline staff, where they are better able to step back and allow the community to step up in direct work with vulnerable people. We will have debated and prepared for the challenges that will inevitably arise.

Financial benefits

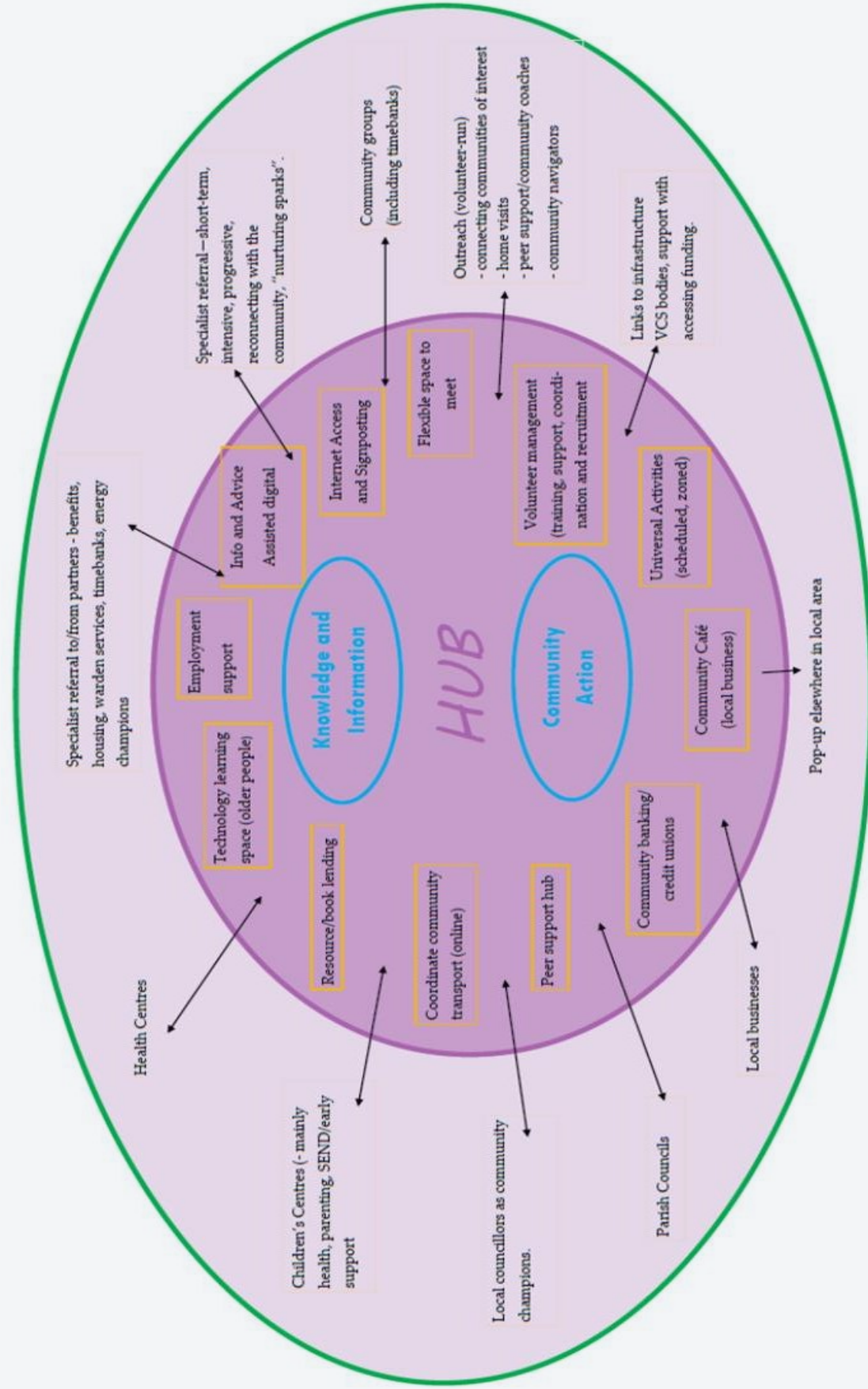
The financial benefits of the strengths-based approach to working with individuals and on fostering more resilient and supportive communities are in relation to:

- ▶ **Costs avoided** – for example, shorter and less costly care packages for older people, where neighbours and friends can do some of the things that we currently ask domiciliary care providers to undertake, or where our Re-ablement team links people to community activities rather than extending their own input;
- ▶ **Helping to guide where savings could be made in front line services** – for example, where local parents step up to successfully offer peer support through children’s centres or other community spaces and therefore reduce the need for services for parents in crisis, or where communities undertake some highways improvement work;
- ▶ **Mitigating the impact of cuts which will have to be made to front line services** – for example, by making sure there is a greater wealth of volunteer capacity in local areas with people willing and able to give some time to help others – through more organised opportunities such as timebanks, or through raising awareness and perceptions of volunteering opportunities.

It is challenging to predict accurately the savings that will accrue. However, we will present our business planning proposals with savings predicated upon this approach. Our work now should help to guide where savings can be made, and inform decisions on how to plan our remaining service budgets in the most effective way for local people.

We will be brave about articulating what we will have to stop doing, but we will underpin this with better support to help communities to step in to do some of the things that we currently do. We will be clear about the financial contributions of local community action, and how this financial contribution can help to protect some Council services.

Building community resilience through community spaces – an example



Help to help yourself

Help from the local community

Help to get involved

- i Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Pilot Project Report
April 2014
- ii Clarence and Gabriel (2014) “People Helping People – the future of public services”
www.nesta.org.uk
- iii Russell (2009) “Communities in Control – Developing Assets”
www.carnegietrust.org.uk
- iv “Radical Efficiency in Action – Transforming Early Years”
www.innovationunit.org www.nesta.org.uk
- v “Managing Demand: Building Future Public Services”
www.thersa.org
- vi “Radical Efficiency in Action – Transforming Early Years”
www.innovationunit.org www.nesta.org.uk
- vii “Managing Demand: Building Future Public Services”
www.thersa.org
- viii Clarence and Gabriel (2014) “People Helping People – the future of public services”
www.nesta.org.uk
- ix “Managing Demand: Building Future Public Services”
www.thersa.org
- x “Radical Efficiency in Action – Transforming Early Years”
www.innovationunit.org www.nesta.org.uk