Cabinet



Date of meeting: 09 March 2021

Title of Report: Community Empowerment Programme: Working

together for a Fairer, Greener, Healthier Plymouth

Lead Member: Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-

operative Development)

Lead Strategic Director: Craig McArdle (Strategic Director for People)

Author: Rachel Silcock

Contact Email: Rachel.silcock@plymouth.gov.uk

Your Reference: CE Report 09.03.21

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report aims to update Cabinet on how we are going to work with individuals, communities and organisations to make Plymouth a Fairer, Greener and Healthier City. Our Engagement Framework and Empowerment Action Plan sets out how we will work in partnership with others and our priorities for action.

Recommendations and Reasons

The report makes the following recommendations:

- Cabinet to endorse the Council's renewed approach to engagement and the principles that will be set out within it.
- Cabinet to approve the Community Empowerment Action Plan 2021.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Community Empowerment is a corporate priority and the option to not take forward the programme was not considered. There is a strong need and appetite to ensure that we are effectively engaging and working with residents, communities and businesses across the city to achieve better outcomes for all.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The Community Empowerment programme supports the implementation of the Plymouth Plan in which the city is committed to making Plymouth a fairer city where everyone does their bit. The Corporate Plan commits the Council to being democratic, providing strong leadership and involving communities in decisions that affect them, which is the underlying aim of Community Empowerment. It also supports the Council's commitment to being a Fair and Co-operative Council in treating everyone with respect and working together with communities to create the city we all want to see.

We value the views of our customers and communities. We want to ensure that everyone is treated with respect, has equal opportunity to have their voice heard and get involved, is listened to and feels that their contributions are valued. The refreshed engagement framework will help to ensure that the Council is effectively listening to their customers and communities as detailed in the Corporate Plan

and demonstrates the importance of engagement as detailed in the Plymouth Plan Statement of Community Involvement.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The Community Empowerment programme draws on several strands of work that are taking place across the Council including Equality and Diversity, the development of an Engagement Framework, Climate Emergency, Commissioning, Digital Plan, Inclusive Growth and others, whilst creating an overarching framework in which these work streams can be integrated into a common vision and approach to working with communities.

As a Council, we are keen to embed the learning from COVID-19 within the Council to ensure that we continue to value the skills, knowledge, and insight which residents, communities and businesses provide. We acknowledge the active engagement which took place between the Council and businesses during the pandemic to deliver Resurgam, our economic recovery plan. We need to embed effective engagement with the business sector across the Council to ensure a more equal, sustainable and prosperous city post-Covid-19. As a Council committed to ensuring sustainable and healthy communities, the programme will embed the learning and innovation happening within the Green Minds programme.

The aim is for the Community Empowerment approach to become business as usual, through a programme of workforce development and sharing of best practice and targeting of existing resources to communities where the need is greatest. This work links closely with Our People Strategy and reflects our commitment to provide our workforce with the skills and knowledge required to deliver high quality services.

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The programme will work with individuals, communities and organisations to promote the aims of the Climate Emergency programme.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

The Community Empowerment programme includes actions to support community resilience, including tackling financial and food insecurity, which will help to tackle child poverty. We are committed to discharging our Public Sector Equality Duty. The strands of work set out within the programme will help us move closer to our ambition of achieving 'Excellence' on the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as it directly works towards the outcomes within the 'Understanding and working with communities' modules within EFLG.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	ef. Title of Appendix		Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Α	Stakeholder engagement											
В	Community Empowerment Action Plan 2021											

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С	Equality Impact Assessment							
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Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are <u>unpublished</u> works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	If some/o	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.							
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Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Craig McArdle (Strategic Director for People)

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 25/02/2021

Cabinet Member approval: Approved via email by Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for

Housing and Co-operative Development)

Date approved: 05/03/2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Community Empowerment refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives. Plymouth City Council is committed to supporting local communities to do things for themselves, and to make their voices heard in shaping the services they use and the places they live.

2. OUR VISION

As a Council we value the contribution that people and communities can make and want to harness that potential to work together for a fairer, greener and healthier city in which everyone does their bit.

In order to unlock this potential we will change the way we work with others, moving from a position of "we'll tell you what we want to do and what we think the city needs", to "we'll collectively find out what our communities need and collectively work together to deliver the city we want". Our approach will be to do things with people, involving them every step of the way and encouraging them to do more things for themselves.

3. WHY NOW?

COVID-19 has proven that when we work together as one City we can transform our City:

- Through the Plymouth Good Neighbours Scheme, in excess of 70 small 'mutual aid' organisations spring up to support local communities and initially over 800 individuals volunteered to carry out tasks to support people.
- At Christmas Plymouth Good Neighbours supported the Christmas in a Box project, packing and delivering 2500 food boxes.
- There are 843 volunteers working at the mass vaccination centre at Home Park.
- Over 2,500 people volunteering to support the mass vaccination programme in January 2021.
- Larger voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and partners across the health and social care system come together to support Caring for Plymouth.
- Smaller voluntary and community organisations, co-operatives and social enterprises have shown their willingness to work together to support people and communities also, with support from the Plymouth Octopus Project (POP) and the Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (PSEN).
- Businesses come together to shape the future of Plymouth's economy by developing Resurgam and a wide variety of related projects led by the Plymouth Growth Board, supported by the Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses Plymouth.

By working together we have started to build a fairer, greener, healthier Plymouth as the examples below highlight:

Fairer - supporting people with food and financial help during COVID

We have worked in partnership with Food Plymouth, Provide Devon and FareShare to support over 50 food aid organisations in Plymouth with over £343,000, to help them provide food and essentials to people in need over the winter. This has included co-ordinating the supply of surplus food from supermarkets so that it is fairly distributed across the city. There has been a direct referral route into Citizens Advice for people accessing food aid, many of whom may not otherwise have asked for advice, as a means of breaking this cycle through advice and support with benefits, debt, housing, and employment. Plymouth Energy Community has been provided with additional funding to ensure that people on low incomes can pay their bills and are able to keep warm during the winter.

Greener - Wild Flower Mad

In 2020, with support from the Future Parks Accelerator programme, we took a radical new approach to grass cutting. After gathering evidence to show that there are twice the number of pollinating insects and species found in meadow areas compared with amenity grassland, we decided to reduce the amount of grass being cut on over 1000 areas across the city to support more plant and animal species thrive. We ran a social media campaign to inform people why they were taking this approach and encouraged residents to tell them what wildflowers they had seen. A survey on one innocuous roadside verge in Prince Rock highlighted 17 wild flower species spotted in one June day - including a Bee Orchid. Customer reports of problems with grass cutting were reduced by one-third of 2019 volumes. As a result of this trial, the Council plans to roll this approach out more widely next year. Through our Green Mind project, we will be supporting residents to take action for nature through events, networking opportunities and resources.

Healthier - Grow, Share, Cook

Plymouth City Council worked with volunteers to co-design Grow, Share, Cook handing the power to local residents to find the best solutions. This volunteer led project has seen volunteers grow food in and around the city on council land and on private land owned by farmers. This produce is then shared with communities via volunteer drivers and volunteer cooks and community cooking sessions. Plymouth City Council fund Grow, Share, Cook who work with Tamar Grow Local and Food is Fun to manage the project, enabling a new yearly cohort of 50 families to receive free fruit and vegetables for a year, deliver support and advice to the existing 250 families who have completed the scheme and the 50 families who are the current cohort and manage. They also support the 158 volunteers who work on the scheme. This highly commended project started in October 2014 following a recommendation by the Fairness Commission.

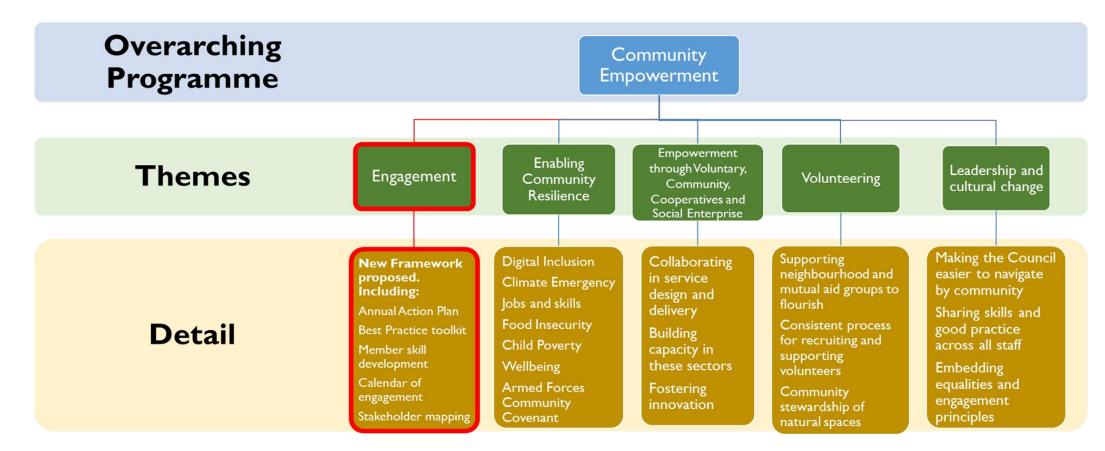
4. WHAT WILL THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME SEEK TO DO?

We have already started to see the benefits of working differently with our communities but we want to achieve more and our Community Empowerment will seek to:

- Improve access to the information, advice and evidence needed to support collaborative decision making and ensure communities and voluntary organisations are informed of their rights.
- Promote self-help and targeted volunteering, reducing the need for 'professional help' and support positive outcomes for all.
- Provide guidance and support to those communities who want to protect local services, own assets or run services in the city.
- Recognise and support the benefits of temporary and meanwhile uses of empty shops and public spaces that can add value to local communities.
- Support children and young people's rights to play an active role in the civic life of the city.
- Ensure that as a city we understand and recognise the social value and impact that businesses and the voluntary and community sector make and that there is a joined-up approach to attracting investment.
- Share knowledge through open data and information which enables communities to have informed engagement, make suggestions for changes and initiate actions relating to their services and lifestyles.
- Provide specific support to local communities and targeted regeneration in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to promote inclusive growth.
- Strengthen communities to build upon social value and social movement so that people have control of the communities where they live.
- Recognise the unique and vital role which members play in communities and the important relationships they hold with stakeholders across the city.

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5. HOW WILL WE DO THIS?



6. OUR ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The development of each of the Community Empowerment themes is underway (see Appendix B for Action Plan). However, initially the focus will be on developing a new Engagement Framework. The purpose of the framework is to outline how the Council will engage with local residents, communities and businesses and empower them to shape policies, strategies and services that affect their lives. There are some great examples of good engagement activity happening across the City, some of which are included in this document.

This new framework will:

- Establish a common understanding of and commitment to engagement across the Council.
- Set clear and specific standards for engagement and consultation activity.
- Identify priority actions to be progressed.

We value the views of everyone who lives, works, studies and volunteers in the city and we want to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to have their voice heard and get involved, is listened to and feels that their contributions are valued. We want to ensure that our approach to engagement is inclusive and representative of the different people and views in our city including those groups who are 'seldom heard'. We have engaged with some of our stakeholders as part of the development of this paper (see Appendix A).

Through the framework, we will:

- Work together with residents, communities and businesses to capitalise on what we
 have learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic to build upon the opportunities that have been
 accelerated by the emergency response.
- Build on best practice examples and develop an understanding of how we best engage residents, communities and businesses.
- Recognise the unique role of members as leaders and as community navigators, providing learning and development opportunities where required.
- Embed the learning from our Equality and Diversity Review (2020), ensuring that our engagement methods are accessible and tailored.
- Use a range of innovative approaches to increase involvement using both formal and informal methods and channels. This will include using appreciative enquiry methodology.
- Harness the skills and values within our own workforce and allow employees to build upon
 existing relationships to create shared values.

7. OUR ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Our approach to engagement will be guided by our corporate values, our Statement of Community Involvement and the following principles:

Democratic - We will provide strong community leadership and work together to deliver our common ambition. Engagement;

- Exemplified by strong community leadership by elected members and residents.
- Where community leaders are accountable to the communities they serve.
- Based on honest and open sharing of issues and solutions.

Responsible - We take responsibility for our actions, care about their impact on others and expect others to do the same. Engagement that;

- Champion's community led initiatives.
- Is outcome focused and is based upon a trauma informed approach to ensure we are sensitive to the needs of residents and communities.
- Is consistent, sustainable and builds relationships into the future.

- Reflects an awareness of the climate emergency and the sustainability agenda.
- Communicates any decisions resulting from our engagement activities.
- Respects all views and maintains confidentiality (where appropriate).

Fair - We will be honest and open in how we act, treat everyone with respect, champion fairness and create opportunities. Engagement that;

- Is accessible, flexible and inclusive.
- Spans communities of identity, interest and geography to create a voice for all.
- Is timely to fully involve residents, communities or businesses throughout the decision-making process.
- Is transparent and provides clarity about the scope of the engagement.

Cooperative - We will work together as partners to serve the best interests of our city and its communities. Engagement that;

- Is collaborative and works towards shared goals.
- Is informed by shared intelligence to support community led decision making.
- Supports people to have the power and confidence to influence decisions that affect them
- Listens, acknowledges, explores and responds.

APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

COVID-19 highlighted the importance of effective engagement across the city with various stakeholders. We have been presented with an opportunity to harness the learning and build on the collaborative environment and partnership working that has developed as a result of the pandemic. We have sought to engage with a wide range of stakeholders as part of the development of the engagement framework.

We identified relevant stakeholders to consult with both internally and externally in the development of our engagement framework including:

- Consultation and initial scoping exercise with Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-operative Development.
- Three two-hour engagement workshops which were attended by 30 different representatives of voluntary and community sector organisations.
- Attendance at an informal Scrutiny Management Board meeting to enable members to offer insight into how they see their role in the context of engagement.
- Engagement with business representatives from the Spend 4 Plymouth group to gain insight from the business community.
- Attendance at a Trauma Informed Network subgroup to ensure that our engagement approach
 is sensitive to the needs of our residents.
- Collaborative working with colleagues within the Community Empowerment Programme.

Stakeholders were provided with an opportunity to contribute to the development of our engagement principles. We have incorporated this feedback in the development of the final version of the principles within this report. Our stakeholders agreed that effective engagement is key and acknowledged that it can be difficult to do well, especially in a large and complex organisation. There was broad agreement that there are some great examples of successful engagement work across the Council (see case studies for examples), however despite this, it was noted that there is often a lack of consistency in the way that different Council services engage with communities and organisations.

Feedback from our engagement activities suggests that engagement is often carried out in a disjointed manner and in isolation from other services and organisations. This can often result in 'over surveying', 'engagement fatigue' and even over burdening smaller organisations.

Organisations in the city are keen to share their expertise and knowledge and want to work with us to more effectively engage. Several organisations commented that they are keen to be involved in the planning/development of engagement activities to help ensure that it is appropriately tailored to different audiences.

All our stakeholders agreed that clearer and accessible information about proposed changes to services or policies is key. Feedback suggested that our engagement activities could at times be more organised and better communicated. Stakeholders used examples such as providing further clarity on what is/isn't in scope within consultations/engagement, appropriate timeframes and lead in times and also providing feedback on the outcome of any engagement activity.

A key theme which emerged from the discussions with all our stakeholders was the important role that listening plays when carrying out engagement. Equally, relationships and the importance of acknowledging issues and collaboratively working together to solve a problem also featured heavily amongst the discussions.

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACTION PLAN 2021

Themes		Aims/Objectives	Ke	y deliverables - Projects	Pı	rogress December 2020		Next Steps	Lead
Leadership and Cultural Change within PCC	•	Encouraging customers, partners, staff and councillors to feel involved in how services are delivered Helping individuals and communities to take responsibility for themselves Changing the relationship between the Council and residents Working with partners to help communities and councillors engage, find information and access the best resources to meet their needs Making PCC easier to navigate by the community by consistency in approach, removing duplication and barriers and identifying opportunities to join up Ensuring a shared understanding of our the Council's approach to empowerment amongst employees, Members and stakeholders	•	Vision and outcomes defined using review of existing frameworks, pledges, policy and business plans Communications Training and cultural change Capture examples of empowerment work, best practise and lessons learned Community of Practice to share knowledge, expertise and best practice with peer support	•	Working group established Governance process in place Strategic vision and outcomes to be finalised (as per governance above) Community of Practice set up with officers from across the Local Authority Currently gathering examples of best practice, sharing Appreciative Enquiry examples Next steps are to create a library of case studies to share with senior managers and other Council officers	•	•	Rachel Silcock
Development of Our Engagement Framework	•	Engagement supports delivery of empowered residents, communities and businesses Longer term the aim is to share and devolve power, through existing democratic processes, to enable local communities to engage with decision makers	•	Refresh of the Framework for working with residents and communities to include best practice examples for members, reaching diverse groups, relationship with VCS/SE. Display document in a visually engaging manner — this could online as an	•	Reviewed and drafted engagement framework. VCS/SE network established through Caring for Plymouth; mutual aid groups engaged Embedded learning from the Equality and Diversity Review - recognising that	•	Consultation with voluntary and community sector and businesses on draft framework – Jan 2021 Draft engagement framework to CMT – Jan 2021 Updated version to Cabinet 09 March 2021	Caroline Marr

		interactive document with constantly updated good examples or a 'designed' publication.	our engagement needs to be accessible and tailored to ensure all voices are heard - especially 'seldom heard groups'.	 Develop and produce an engagement toolkit to encourage best practice within the organisation. Enhance the skills of members to develop their role through learning and development opportunities. Work with the VCS to map the different communities within our city Development of Engagement Calendar including Member led events. Embed engagement within the Scrutiny process and share good practice examples with scrutiny members to help ensure consistency across the organisation. 	
Informal Volunteering and Formal Volunteering	 Increasing the number of people who take action within communities of geography or interest to support an empowered community Supporting the creation of conditions needed for community/mutual aid groups to flourish The Council as an employer recognises the contributions of volunteering 	 Increased networks of mutual aid and community groups Increased opportunities for citizens to take action Develop and manage the Plymouth Good Neighbours Scheme Work with Our Plymouth as the digital volunteering platform Understand the Local Authority's requirements for volunteers and support best practice Integration of the NHS responder volunteers into 	 Business case for PGNS roles Volunteer Manager and Coordinator in place Setting up Care Volunteers scheme; Establish a robust recruitment and selection process for volunteers Successful 30k Embedding and Evaluating NHS Volunteer Responders programme funding bid Co-ordinating the PGNS volunteer response to Covid-19 e.g. Prescription/food parcel deliveries 	Informal volunteering -	

	the Plymouth Good Neighbours Scheme Implement the Council's volunteering policy for employees Work with directorates to encourage volunteering within the boundaries of the City	 Work with partners to promote opportunities for volunteering Identify different opportunities for example mentoring and coaching with different groups within the City. 	 Review and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the scheme. Continue Plymouth's award winning Cities of Service citizen engagement work with residents Work with Our Plymouth to improve digital platform for volunteering Establish a clear and consistent process for matching service users with volunteers Continue to support COVID response - Caring for Plymouth/PGNS Developing opportunities for community stewardship of natural spaces through the Green Minds and Future Parks programme Continue to develop our employee volunteering offer
Creating the conditions for VCS/SE and Co-ops to empower citizens by: • developing VCS/SE and Co-ops capacity • Building better understanding of the VCS/SE and Co-ops amongst PCC staff and stakeholders • Improving our service design by working with VCS/SE and Co-ops as suppliers and through their relationships with users and communities	data to support needs analysis and including partner management with support organisations Training materials about these sectors and their ability to socially innovate Bringing together cross sector collaborations for social innovation Co-production and design	 Community Map of support groups started Domestic Abuse co-design initiative Alliance co-design ongoing Mental health service design BRP programme review (80 support interventions June to Dec 2020) POD updated with Covid response, pharmacy, shopping, mental health information 	materials to raise awareness across Council and stakeholders State of the sector review post COVID Identify Funding for more

	 Maintaining mechanisms to facilitate their innovation and autonomous delivery of services 	services by the Council and externally A Community Map of support groups Update and promotion of POD Network support to PCC VCS/SE and Co-op suppliers Business Relationship Programme with key VCS/SE organisations and Co-ops	 Creating new tenancies through Community Asset Transfer and Meanwhile Use Supporting social innovation in Food Banks 	We will increase resilience in communities, empowering citizens by making them more aware of existing resources in their community
Enabling Community Resilience	Ensuring that community resilience activity addresses the latest priorities through regular reviews Improving resilience in communities to address their priority needs e.g. support people to improve their wellbeing, tackle the climate emergency, improve equality of opportunity Providing targeted support to communities that need it Empowering communities to tackle the causes of poverty and exclusion through support such as co-operative development and mutual aid Supporting the Digital Plan themes, in particular to create Digital Communities High quality, accessible public natural spaces for recreation, sports, access to nature for HWB -particularly in deprived areas where less access to private outdoor space	 Build community profiles Build priority framework Map Council activities in relation to priorities e.g. Financial Security, Food Insecurity, Digital Inclusion, Climate Emergency, Fuel poverty, Natural Infrastructure 	 Current priorities are food insecurity, unemployment, financial insecurity, digital inclusion, skills, wellbeing and mental health and climate emergency Increased funding to Advice Plymouth to provide targeted debt and benefit advice to people using food aid 21 organisations have received funding of nearly £140,000 including Food Plymouth, which will help to co-ordinate food supply in the city. Working with FareShare on co-operative approaches to food poverty Distribution of 2000 copies of a survey to explore where and why people are digitally excluded 	 Working with Advice Plymouth on community- based information and advice approach, training volunteers and community activists Working with Food Plymouth to develop sustainable approaches to food insecurity; Implementation of Digital Plan Digital Champion qualification to be available by March 2021. Signposting Tool to locate access to devices, training and free connectivity is

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		maximising physical activity	
		in CYP	
		Implementation of Future	
		Parks programme	