

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

Date 17th July 2013

REPORT TITLE Newcastle-under-Lyme Co-operative Strategy 2013-2015: Update on progress

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships – Mark Bailey

Portfolio: Transformation, Policy and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide the Cabinet with an update on the development of the Co-operative Strategy 2013-2015 (see Appendix A). The Strategy was previously approved in draft by Cabinet in February 2013.

The Strategy provides the framework for the Borough Council to develop, in conjunction with others, a Co-operative Council in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The development of a co-operative council is one of the key priorities as set out in the current Council Plan.

This report updates Members on developments and also sets out a series of proposals and actions for further work around the co-operative concept.

Recommendations

- a) That Cabinet notes the contents of the report including the action plan to be found at Appendix B.
- b) That Cabinet makes any further amendments or suggestions to the content of the Strategy, noting that this update was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on 24th June 2013
- c) That the Cabinet requests further circulation of the Strategy to partners and communities as part of an engagement process on the meaning of the 'co-operative' concept for Newcastle and also requests further updates on the Strategy's development at future meetings of the Cabinet.

Reasons

The Co-operative Council Strategy 2013-2015 provides the main framework for work being done by Newcastle Borough Council in conjunction with its partners, communities and other key stakeholders in develop a Co-operative Council for Newcastle under Lyme B.C.

The Strategy brings together existing areas of work and provides a common basis for future work programmes as well as providing a framework for future development of the co-operative concept.

This report sets out for Cabinet details of a number of areas of work being progressed which are linked to the Co-operative Council concept, and also sets out an action plan at Appendix xx setting out a number of actions related to the development of a Co-operative Council as identified by the LGA Peer Challenge in October 2012 and also via a number of other initiatives since the original draft Strategy was approved in February 2013.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The background to the co-operative approach is set out in the draft strategy itself, found at Appendix A of this report.
- 1.2 The initiative has been developed nationally due to a number of related issues currently faced by the public sector in general, and local authorities in particular. These include reductions in resources and rising expectations from service users and citizens generally.
- 1.3 The co-operative approach has at its foundation the assertion that traditional approaches to local government and local governance, together with the existing approaches to service delivery are no longer fit for purpose and, instead, new models of co-production and decision making need to be explored which mean a new role for the organisations involved, including local authorities.
- 1.4 The co-operative approach puts the local authority at the centre of a process of change in the local area, using its position as a civic leader to develop communities, staff, partners and other sectors to work together in order to continue to deliver high quality services against a challenging financial background.

2. **Further Developments**

- 2.1 The initial draft of the Newcastle under Lyme Co-operative Council Strategy 2013-2015 was presented to Cabinet in February 2013.
- 2.2 The Strategy sought to develop the ideas outlined above and translate them into a set of core concepts for Newcastle-under-Lyme. These concepts emphasise the desire of the Borough Council to use its role as a leading body within the community to ensure that citizens, partner agencies and staff work together to improve the borough.
- 2.3 These concepts and how they will be taken forward were set out in the Strategy as the '5Es':
 - Encouraging collaborative working – developing partnership working further and deeper, making it a critical part of how the Council operates;
 - Enhancing citizen/customer experiences – co-operating with citizens/customers by making their experiences in doing business with the Council as simple and straightforward as possible;
 - Engagement with others – developing consultation and communication further to ensure that as many people as possible know what we are doing and why;
 - Establishing change – to be clear about what change we want and why and how we will deliver it – ensuring that any change is fair; and
 - Empowering stakeholders - people taking charge of their own lives and being part of decisions about their own area
- 2.4 Building on the '5Es', the Borough Council has changed its own organisational values to reflect the desire to work co-operatively. These values replace the previous values which were Putting People First; Delivering Excellent and Sustainable Services; and Making the Best Use of Resources. The 'new' set of values, as included in the current Council Plan are:
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 - We will put residents at the centre of everything we do

- We will work co-operatively with our partners and communities
- We will be open and transparent in all our decision making
- We will be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things

2.5 In addition to these strategic changes, a number of areas of work have commenced which have focused on developing a co-operative approach as their primary focus. The list of these work areas includes the following: -

- Building on changes to our partnership working by developing new links with areas such as health and using co-location to further partnership work in key areas such as anti-social behaviour
- Further developing LAPs and working with town/parish councils with a view to encouraging devolution where possible
- Enhancing consultation work where possible and where relevant
- Setting up a partner workshop on investigating the impact of welfare reform
- Developing the concept of the 'customer journey' – analysing where people do business with the council with a view to ensuring that the process is as simple and straightforward as possible
- Inclusion of the new values in the Council Plan for 2013-2016
- Developing an Employer Supported Volunteering scheme for the Council's staff to volunteer locally
- Work with staff, including a conference on the issue in May 2013

2.6 As well as this work, the Council's developing performance framework has sought to include the co-operative council priority as part of the areas being measured in key areas of council activity such as workforce development, Member development; community engagement and partnership working.

2.7 Finally, the Council has become a member of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network. The Network is made up of councils who subscribe to the principles of co-operative working and delivery, namely: -

- Working with local people to create solutions
- Using concepts like collective action and co-operation as the foundation for developing solutions
- Re-balancing power between public services and citizens to deliver better outcomes and manage demand on public services

2.8 The Network was formally launched at the LGA Conference on 3rd July 2013.

3. **Issues to consider**

3.1 In addition to the work already being done by the Council, a number of other areas relating to the co-operative council concept need to be considered by Cabinet.

3.2 These issues are set out at Appendix B – the action plan linked to the Co-operative Strategy. A number of these issues were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on 24th June 2013.

3.3 The first of these issues relates to communicating the co-operative council concept to other partners and to communities. This covers making sure that partners and others know what the Borough Council means by its priority to become a co-operative council and also

engages with partners and other stakeholders on how it is going to bring the concept to life. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee asked for a list of key stakeholders to be included in this process. Such a list could include the following: -

- Staffordshire County Council – including all parts of the organisation
- Parish/Town Councils – also linked to LAPs (the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee felt that relations between LAPs and Parish/Town Councils needed to be improved)
- Locality Action Partnerships (LAPS) (although the Co-ordinating Committee expressed concerns about using LAPs to progress the co-operative concept)
- Staffordshire Police
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue
- Voluntary sector
- Health service – including Public Health (now part of Staffordshire County Council) and Clinical Commissioning Groups
- Registered Social Landlords, including Aspire Housing

It should be emphasised that this list is not exhaustive, and can be changed or developed. It is further proposed that the communication process could include the development of a Co-operative Charter, which will allow others to know what to expect from the Borough Council in terms of co-operative working in the future.

- 3.4 A further key issue for the development of the co-operative council is around training and development – specifically the development of elected Members, Borough Council staff; and communities in order to recognise the primacy of co-operation in terms of progressing key areas of work.
- 3.5 As previously, the focus of NBC activity and service provision is on the citizen/customer and a review of how to make the citizen contact with the Council as simple as possible so that services are delivered effectively and efficiently is an ongoing piece of work for NBC.
- 3.6 As part of the training and development process, it is proposed that co-operation is embedded as part of the Council's decision making and consultation processes – to build on work which has already taken place in key areas such as around budget setting in order that decisions are as open and transparent as possible and that communities and others are involved in decision making as far as possible. Connected with this will be the issues of ensuring data transparency and also developing models of co-production (where services are delivered not just by one organisation but by partnerships between organisations and communities).
- 3.7 Finally, the co-operative approach is to be developed in order that the opportunities presented by the Localism Act are taken up by communities where possible – this might be around the Right to Challenge process or the Right to Bid/Build. Every effort will be made to ensure that communities are a part of how assets are used in the future.
- 3.8 Overall, the desire of NBC is to introduce change with the community and other partners rather than doing things to the community. It is on this basis that a consultation exercise with the community will be undertaken and the key areas of action are, as said, included in the action plan at Appendix B.
- 3.9 It is recognised by the Borough Council that, with the increasingly challenging financial picture over the coming years, not everything can continue to be done indefinitely. The key part of the co-operative approach, however, is that any changes are introduced in a way that involves all interested parties and where decisions are made collaboratively.

3. **Options**

There are no options to be considered at this stage. Cabinet is asked to consider the Strategy and action plan, and to make any comments as required. Further consultation and engagement is due to take place with partners and other key stakeholders after this Cabinet meeting and a further updates will be presented to Cabinet at a later date.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 It is proposed Cabinet consider the report. Strategy and action plan and make comments and changes as required.

4.2 It is proposed that the Strategy becomes the overarching document for work in these key areas of activity.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 The Strategy has been developed in order to organise the work being done under the co-operative heading. The Strategy has taken note of key issues as set out in this report and has also taken into account the restrictions placed on organisations and individuals due to the prevailing economic situation. The Strategy forms the basis for ongoing work in these areas over the next few years and provides a structure and coherence which will assist in moving forward in the areas covered by the Strategy.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 The Strategy has potential to help deliver key outcomes across all the priorities of the Borough Council.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 None at present – there is no statutory requirement to provide this Strategy.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being developed for the Strategy.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 There are a range of resource implications in terms of delivering the Strategy and these have been referred to in this report and elsewhere.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 The GRACE risk assessment for the Strategy is being developed. The key risks include not committing enough resources to these areas of work and the community and Borough continuing to deal with the ongoing issues as a result.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11.1 No direct implications, although these issues will be part of the projects set out in the Strategy.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This item is included in the forward plan.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

February 6th 2013 – Cabinet

14. **List of Appendices**

14.1 Appendix A – Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Co-operative Strategy 2013-2015

14.2 Appendix B – Draft Action Plan

15. **Background Papers**

15.1 None.

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