

Committee: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 8 February 2023

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| Subject: | Community Support Services Review |
| Lead Officer: | Ray Lee |
| Portfolio Holder: | Cllr Gill Coates |
| Link to Council Priorities: | All |
| Exempt information: | Not Applicable |
| Delegated status: | Recommendation to Council |
| Key decision: | Yes |

Executive Summary:

Community Services Review

This report introduces the review of Community Support Services (CSS) carried out by Collaborate CIC, which was agreed by Council on 28 September 2022, as a part of the Council's Transformation Programme. It sets out an exciting vision for the future of CSS, based on insights from data, reports and strategic documents. It contains feedback from conversations with over 50 stakeholders including Surrey CC, health partners, elected members, current users of services, visits to the depot and all centres and two workshops with the managers of the CSS service. It also sets out emerging options for how this vision could be realised.

Recommendation: that Cabinet recommends to Council that:

- (a) the report from Collaborate CIC be accepted;**
- (b) the Vision "Elmbridge Connects" for the future delivery of the Council's Community Support Services be adopted; and**
- (c) the emerging principles to support the delivery of the Vision be adopted**

Report:

1. Background

The emerging Vision for Elmbridge acknowledges that whilst this is a vibrant borough, not everyone shares in its prosperity. We are committing to ensuring that we will not leave behind the most vulnerable in our community. We believe strongly in the power of community and what can be achieved by local people and businesses, public sector partners and the voluntary and community sector.

The transformation plan seeks to deliver the Vision and as a part of this the Council has embarked on an ambitious transformation programme to review our long-established discretionary service areas with the aim of

ensuring that they target community need as accurately as possible. The transformation programme recognises that in a post-pandemic and an increasingly digital 21st Century, the Council's service offer must meet changing needs, and this will require modernisation.

Collaborate CIC were employed against this backdrop to provide an independent review of the current CSS offer (Appendix 1) ensuring it was fit for purpose and for the future and is financially sustainable in line with the Insight report Members agreed in December 2021.

2. **Current Community Support Services Offer**

There is much to be proud of in what Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) has provided. The study found that for the people that use the existing CSS services they are transformational, with many powerful stories and examples of people being supported to live independently and well for longer, reducing demand on health and care services. The Council has prioritised the needs of older residents in "ageing well" through the support of public, voluntary, and charitable services including day care and associated facilities, links with adult social care and integrated NHS health care alongside informal community support.

3. The EBC model was to establish a network of day centres geographically spread across the borough where older people could benefit from a subsidised hot (three course) meal in the company of others and can take part in a range of activities. The broader notion of these buildings becoming community centres in the traditional sense, serving multi-generational customers, or operating as dual-purpose facilities across an offer extended but this hasn't been successful.

4. **Need for change.**

The service is recognised by many to be benefitting too few residents. Generous estimates are that 2% of residents directly benefit. The offer is still perceived as day centres for the elderly (across the council and externally) and so does not attract some of the residents who need support including low income working age families. CSS is felt to be missing opportunities to work with cohorts of the community who are in real need. There are 136,626 residents in total in EBC and 9.3% of households are financially stretched (according to Acorn data). Citizens Advice is currently reporting an 80% increase in the number of clients approaching services in Elmbridge with a financial crisis issue related to debt.

Need is highest in five geographic areas (Walton N&S, Cobham, Lower Green, West Molesey & Whiteley Village), although there are pockets of need everywhere. However, when looking at overall data on need, three centres are not in highest need areas (Thames Ditton, Weybridge and Claygate).

The service model is felt by some stakeholders to be too paternalistic, with the council taking too much responsibility for direct delivery. Many stakeholders reflected that the core offer feels old-fashioned (for example the provision of 3 course meals, full day of activities based in a centre).

The service does not currently look much beyond its boundaries, thinking more holistically about how to support a wide range of residents to be independent and socially connected and building active connections with the wider system, such as the VCS, housing, family support, social care, and health.

The service is expensive even for the value it creates. A recent benchmarking assessment shows that EBC is the most expensive service provider (measured by revenue spend) of any district council in the UK. EBC is facing a financial challenge and it is widely recognised that it cannot afford to spend what it currently invests on Community Support Services.

There is limited data and information systems, which hinder the ability of the service to demonstrate impact currently. Data monitoring and outcome measurement should be improved to inform decision making and ongoing development

5. **Staff capacity is currently a brake on service evolution**

Managers have little time to operate strategically as they spend much of their time responding to external priorities, firefighting and on operational service delivery relating to the existing core offer (for example dealing with staffing issues, IT, facilities management, meals on wheels rota and delivery when there aren't enough volunteers). There is restricting space for innovation and relationship building which could create better value for more people in the community. Staff are exhausted from what they feel is a relentless set of external factors (pandemic, cost of living, warm hubs, etc.) and anxious after being in limbo about the future.

6. **Opportunities for change**

Looking forward, the services exist within a wider direction of travel for holistic and preventative neighbourhood services. NHS reforms are pulling in the direction of locally based services, more joined up and holistic, preventing demand and keeping people well. This provides a framework in which CSS can play a useful role within the wider system, alongside other partners. System partners are keen for Elmbridge to continue a CSS offer in some form but are not wedded to the current model. Health and social care are keen for EBC to develop approaches which align with their direction of travel (i.e. locality based working, focusing on prevention, early intervention and delaying needs from escalating). They are also keen to work with Elmbridge as partners to address the wider determinants of health

Therefore, the questions we are trying to address through a new vision for a reformed CSS are:

- How can engaged communities and council capacity enable a network of support which promotes healthier, happier lives, identifies problems before they become deep rooted, and narrows the inequalities which are significant, but sometimes hidden in our borough?
- What can we do locally to alleviate pressure on our local primary care system and, to improve preventative care?
- How can we ensure this is all delivered in a financially sustainable way?

7. **The Vision for Community Support Services**

“Elmbridge Connects”

The proposed vision in the Collaborate CIC report is an ambitious transformation shifting from the existing model of community support.

It aims to support all residents in need to flourish and thrive, maintain independence, and build social connection, through a holistic model of support integrated with other local partners and with residents playing a key role in design and delivery.

EBC will act as a Community Leader, Conveyor and Connector, bringing together statutory and voluntary community partners to implement this shared vision and influencing at a wider level via Surrey CC, PCNs and ICPs. It is a role already successfully delivered in terms of the Cost-of-Living Steering Group.

It builds on the strength of CSS, using experience from the pandemic and technology to improve outreach whilst providing the opportunity for EBC to continue to invest whether it's in buildings and/or community development support. Whilst “Connecting Communities” is a succinct way of showing the Council's intention, in order for it to be more relevant for those in Elmbridge, the Vision “Elmbridge Connects” is proposed. It was the title of the previous CSS older persons strategy and therefore is immediately recognisable. It also maintains the previous ambitions of addressing isolation and independent living.

8. **Emerging principles**

The proposed principles that support the vision are:

Collaborative by default: the interconnectedness of issues is reflected, and collaborative and relational approaches are the norm

Co-produced: the future offer is developed with the community and stakeholders

Systemic: the future service works closely with wider system partners including health, VCS, police, schools, faith groups and elected members

Preventative: the offer focuses on preventing issues escalating

Strength-based: the offer builds on strengths and assets, and goes where there is energy locally

Evidence-informed: the offer responds to local need

This is a huge opportunity to create a new approach that will ensure that the Council can offer support to a wider range of those in the Borough who are in need. It will build on the Council's experience and expertise but at the same time it will broaden the Council's support especially to those who may be vulnerable and/or financially stretched.

It can achieve this by working with a system of partners including health, VCS, police, schools, faith groups and elected members. This not only ensures that we have a joined-up approach to those in need but creates a

sustainable model of quality delivery. Working closely with partners will provide the opportunity to innovate and consider different funding approaches. We can work together to pressure on our local primary care system and to improve preventative care.

9. **Delivering the Vision**

The review has come up with four possible options for the future delivery of centre services. They are intended at this stage to provoke discussion about the direction of travel. They range from a very radical re-thinking which has implications for the whole of EBC, through to less radical change, although all are designed to achieve the overall vision and ambition.

However, in each of the options, the core purpose and activities of CSS remains broadly the same: offering holistic and joined-up support to residents alongside wider partners, supporting people to flourish and remain independent, and moving from being known as a service that supports the elderly to a service that works with all residents. In all options specialist services Cobham Link and Dementia services would continue

The options are:

- a) A decentralised community-based council – this is a shift away from having a corporate and municipal building. It aims to bring all the Council's resources much closer to the communities that it serves through a smaller number of buildings based in the locations that work best for local people. It would be a radical step and from what we can find EBC would be the first local Council to embark on decentralisation on this scale. Whilst there are issues that need to be addressed for the other areas departments within the Council, it would put the Council in a position to deliver on the CSS Vision.
- b) Capital investment in a smaller number of multi-purpose Connected Community centres – This option addresses several of the issues in the report around providing services where they are needed, creating a new building aimed at wider needs and addressing the perception that our community buildings only for “old” people. Through good design and rebranding a multi-generational building could be developed that would not only appeal to a wider section of the residents but also provides an opportunity to work on the design with colleagues in SCC and the NHS to provide a seamless health offer.
- c) Service reduction based on refurbishment of a smaller number of existing centres
This has the advantage that it would be the quickest most cost-effective option. It provides the opportunity to start delivering the new Elmbridge Connects Vision at an earlier date. With good design it can also provide the service for a wider group of people and joint working with SCC and the NHS.
- d) A community offer with no buildings – This option provides the opportunity to deliver services in the community at existing community

buildings such as churches, schools, existing village halls, sports clubs etc. It ensures that of existing community owned or operated buildings are optimised and encourages joint working between the Council and those parties. It is not considered that.

These options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and the final decision can be a hybrid of any parts of the four options, for example a mixture of options two and three to retain these buildings that are in the right place and can be adapted whilst accepting that there may need to be some new build.

To decide on the future of the centre delivery and agree on one or a hybrid mixture of the options, as detailed, in the report we need to:

- Continue to improve our data monitoring and outcome measurement to provide the data required to make an evidence-based decision on the options above.
- Ensure the design of this new service delivery is carried out in consultation with users, potential users, partners, and voluntary groups, especially those already working in the areas of need.
- Build an understanding of current delivery at the centres to ensure we retain successes in those areas of need
- To establish the opportunities that the current centre sites could offer for exciting new purposes. or if there are alternative sites which would better be suited to the purpose described above

If Council agrees the recommendations, then a feasibility study can be started straight way to assess the options and make recommendations for implementation.

10. **Practical Next Steps**

Achieving the vision and truly establishing a changed culture through the principles will take time to build trust and relationships, building on the strong foundation of the current CSS. Consideration of the future estate will also take time and capital investment.

However, there are immediate and practical opportunities which could both start to incrementally realise aspects of the vision and release savings

Community Transport

Huge strides have already been made in increasing income and making the service carbon free. The review acknowledges this and the opportunities it has to grow further. The aim is to develop the business plan to increase the number of journeys and for the service become profit making within 3 years. We will do this by:

- Increasing the size of fleet and team with an entirely green fleet of vehicles
- Working with Surrey County Council to agree three-year SEN transport contrasts rather than current 12 months to provide more stability to the service.

- Changing the livery and branding to feel less municipal and encourage broader community use
- Contributing to the gap in comprehensive local transport through innovative schemes open to all residents who struggle to get around
- Assessing opportunities to deliver transport for other District and Boroughs
- Consider contracting on behalf of a possible subregional partnership as a high-quality SEN transport provider, dial a ride provider/hospital to home bringing in significant sums of funding to Elmbridge.

To deliver these changes, the Community Transport Business Plan needs to be updated at which timescales can be established. Work has already started.

Community Alarm

Since the pandemic the take up of Community Alarms has been low and added to this there are now several alternative suppliers in the market. Work has already started to review the current market and consider a service jointly or wholly delivered with or by other District and Borough Council's to drive costs down and provide a robust, modernised service. Residents will not notice any difference in the level of service. The aim is that the service becomes at least is cost neutral within 2 years. The future business plan to be agreed by end of April 2023.

Meals on Wheels

This remains an important service allowing elderly vulnerable residents to stay independent. However, costs are high and therefore it is proposed that the operational model moves from a dispersed approach with 6 kitchens and each centre manager independently recruiting volunteer drivers and organising rotas, to a centralised system delivering meals out of 2-3 locations with a dedicated team. A pilot for this provision is being introduced at Hersham and Molesey. This will be monitored for the first three months of operation and at that same time a business plan developed for further centralisation. The intention is that the customers should not notice any difference.

Specialist Services

Dementia Services and Cobham Link services remain popular, and both can already prove a need in the community. We will look to develop their business plans with the intention of growing the services albeit they may need to run from different locations. The plans to be complete by end of April.

Thames Ditton Centre

The use of the Thames Ditton Centre is very low outside of the Dementia Care. The staff have worked had since the end of the pandemic to attract visitors, but figures remain very low. It is therefore proposed that consideration is given to moving the Dementia Service and consulting locally on whether there is a community interest in operating the centre in a

similar model to Lower Green and Vine Hall. If there isn't any interest, then consideration should be given an alternative use of the site. If agreed the promotion of the site will start in March 2023.

Financial implications:

Elmbridge Connects provides the basis for a sustainable financial model of service delivery into the future.

It follows the Ignite study of "Strategic Benchmarking and Opportunity Identification" (December 2021) which found that the Council spent more on its CSS offer than any authority in the Country. The study recommended that the Council:

- Refreshed the service specifications to maximise value for money against the corporate plan objectives
- Maintain momentum in driving forward collaboration opportunities across Surrey
- Target support where it is needed most.

The Ignite Study's forward-thinking approach, driven by data and insights provided background to the Elmbridge 2030 Report and the emerging 2018-23 Vision.

The Collaborate CIC report provides a detailed financial analysis and has made proposals which seek to meet the wider need of the community from within the current and forecast financial envelope.

Officers will work up business plans for the various elements in both the Vision and the practical next steps. It may be necessary to buy in some capacity and/or expertise at this stage to draft the various business plans. This will be funded from the Transformation Programme Budget.

Environmental/Sustainability Implications:

Transport

- The Green Fleet Strategy, which details how the fleet can be carbon free by 2030 is elsewhere on this agenda.

Buildings

- Whatever form the future provision of services many take, either in redesigning existing or building new consideration of the carbon effect will be part of the business plan.

Legal implications:

None at this stage.

Equality Implications:

Central to the delivery of this Vision is the need to inclusive in all we do. The Vision seeks to support those in need in the borough regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, or any other status.

Risk Implications:

The Vision and principles do not create any risk. Risks may emerge as the business plans are drafted for each individual project and they will be managed and mitigated during the feasibility stage.

Community Safety Implications:

None

Principal Consultees:

As detailed in the Collaborate CIC report Appendix 1

Enclosures/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Review of Community Support Services – Collaborate CIC January 2023

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