

GROWTH, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
12 JULY 2022	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Rob Hill, Assistant Director: Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Steve Allen, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communication, Culture and Communities	
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COHESION AND COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS ENGAGEMENT - DEVELOPING THE APPROACH

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Assistant Director for Communities	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee:</p> <p>Consider and endorse the approach to community champions engagement and the recommendations for developing this approach in line with best practice and to support the cohesion work of the council.</p>	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Growth, Resources and Communities Committee following a request from the Committee at the Annual Work Programming Session on 9 June 2022.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 To report on the approach being developed by the Think Communities Service to support cohesion in the city through participation, engagement, consultation and coproduction alongside its citizens.

2.2 This report is for Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by the Council:

- 2. Neighbourhood and Community Support (including cohesion and community safety)
- 3. Equalities

2.3 This report relates to the Corporate priorities focussed on community engagement, prevention, civic participation and tackling civic inequality.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Peterborough City Council has a long history of supporting, championing, consulting and collaborating with a wide range of groups in our city. In the past our city has faced some significant cohesion challenges, including three visits from the English Defence League, where our established relationships with key communities and stakeholders were vital in the response. Through the pandemic, new challenges have arisen including our ability to reach out to all communities to give access to Covid-19 vaccines and of course the fantastic work of community champions, leaders and groups, to ensure that Covid-19 compliance information was translated, reached our diverse communities and that they were supported to self-isolate.
- 4.1.2 The most recent growing challenge at national level, and one which is relevant to the city, is the question of how to build trust with our communities in the wake of such a difficult few years. We have faced a global pandemic, and are concerned about the rising cost of living, coupled with the challenge of climate change and increased migration caused by global conflicts. The expectations our population have in regard to the role of national and local government are high and sometimes unrealistic in terms of how much influence local leaders and decision makers have to control these factors.
- 4.1.3 There is consequently a need to re-connect and continue to build trust with residents under challenging circumstances. Peterborough is one of the fastest growing cities in the country and there are fantastic investment and development opportunities coupled with amazing work being undertaken to support our residents.
- 4.1.4 Peterborough City Council have a role alongside our public sector partners, businesses, voluntary, community and faith sector partners, to build on the previous good work and ensure that our approach is up to date and relevant. With a growing and changing population we must be able to reach to our new migrant communities and underrepresented groups, through effective co-production and engagement and ensure that all our residents are afforded the opportunity to play a full part in society, to help shape our services to ensure that they are accessible.
- 4.1.5 The aims of this work have been varied, however the primary impact of this collaboration has been to promote community cohesion, integration and trust within communities but there are other objectives as set out below.
- 4.1.6 The Think Communities service aims to complement and build on the engagement that Members have with their communities and therefore this service plans to develop work in this area by building on historically strong partnerships, addressing the challenges raised during Covid-19 and developing new links with key stakeholders.

4.2 Aims and Objectives

- 4.2.1 Our objective of building a strong framework of community engagement will contribute to the following aims:-
- Prevention of escalating needs by ensuring that local people are aware of how to access support early
 - Building trust within the community
 - Managing and addressing community tensions and fostering good community relations
 - Using grass roots insight to inform the delivery of local services and tackle civic inequality
 - Fostering community resilience

4.3 Further Background

- 4.3.1 Our approach to Cohesion has involved engaging with local representatives of key minority groups and local stakeholders through 1:1 engagement, consultation and various forums, in order to:

- gather local intelligence and feedback about community tensions, challenges experienced by members of the community
- identify opportunities for supporting community resilience
- inform the design and delivery of local services and policies– where feedback highlighted opportunities to improve inclusivity by addressing barriers that key groups experienced

4.3.2 Work involving interaction with communities, speaking to influential community leaders, and building a champion network through relationships, has been taking place over the past 20 years within the city. The historical work that has been carried out in this area put future endeavours to work closely with community representatives, on a good footing.

4.3.3 The team have continued to build the approach and through the use of various channels of communication and engagement, strong feedback loops have been developed and maintained between the council and members of key communities in order to enable proactive responses to local issues and tensions and foster good community relations. This has involved the following types of activity:

- Gathering local views from over 50 local influencers who give a sense of existing opinion about the issues at stake
- Reaching underrepresented and ‘hard to reach’ groups by first engaging through individuals that are prominent in the neighbourhood cascading information or directly facilitating engagement.
- Carrying out pre-engagement work with trusted community stakeholders before consultations, in order to ensure that we understand the shape of public opinion and hear from a range of views, including those that are against planned changes

4.3.4 This has enabled the service to promote and reinforce links across different communities through the use of forums, and civic and community-based cohesion-focused events and activities. This area of activity applies ‘contact theory’ which suggests that the more people meet, the more they find common ground. The use of coproduction approaches has therefore intrinsically contributed towards social cohesion on one level, by bringing a range of perspectives and interests into conversation with the council and each other.

4.3.5 From the outset of the pandemic in 2020, the value of the strong links with local communities was evident. Local representatives and stakeholders from key communities translated key compliance messaging and promoted messaging in relevant languages to encourage safe behaviours and enable access to key service such as Covid-19 testing. A Community Champions Network was formed, comprising faith leaders, representatives of charities, voluntary associations, resident groups and other organisations.

4.3.6 The feedback, ideas and suggestions from Champions helped to shape aspects of the Covid-19 response. This included insights on effective places to target local testing provision, translation needs, clarification of key messaging, local views and local issues with non-compliance – often linked to barriers to accessing information, guidance, testing resources or self-isolation support. The Champions also helped to disseminate key messaging, and this had significant impact on take up within communities at events such as the ‘Peterborough Push’ in June 2021. Feedback received from partners about the benefits of working in this way, has been positive.

4.3.7 However, in line with trends across the wider population, as time went on, the Communities service observed a decline in the impact of stakeholder messaging on behaviour change and a sense that we had reached the limits of reach / influence into key communities. This is partly linked to the groups represented within and currently lacking representation within the existing network. Within Table 1, we have captured the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups represented within the forum and with whom there are one or more identified representatives that we work with. Table 2 captures the faith groups that we currently work with within the city.

Table 1: Peterborough's Census 2011 ethnicity data against current representation within our engagement network (although the 2021 census has been carried out, at the time of writing the ethnicity results by Local Authority have not yet been released).

Ethnic Group	Peterborough		Representation within existing networks (Green = representation present)
	No.	Percentage (%)	
White British	130,232	70.9	
White Irish	1,257	0.7	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	560	0.3	
White: Other White	19,495	10.6	
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1,542	0.8	
Mixed: White and Black African	827	0.5	
Mixed: White and Asian	1,384	0.8	
Mixed: Other Mixed	1,195	0.7	
Asian or Asian British: Indian	4,636	2.5	
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	12,078	6.6	
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	229	0.1	
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	872	0.5	
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	3,677	2.0	
Black or Black British: Black African	2,480	1.4	
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	1,174	0.6	
Black or Black British: Other Black	510	0.3	
Other ethnic group: Arab	428	0.2	
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	1,055	0.6	

Table 2: Peterborough's Census 2011 religion data against current representation within our engagement network

Religion	Peterborough		Representation within existing networks (Green = representation present)
	No.	Percentage (%)	
Christian	104,202	56.7	
Buddhist	463	0.3	
Hindu	2,320	1.3	
Jewish	144	0.1	
Muslim	17,251	9.4	
Sikh	1,184	0.6	
Other religions	591	0.3	
No religion	45,183	24.6	
Religion not stated	12,293	6.7	

4.3.8 A key function that Community Champions have fulfilled, is to support with generating translations of key messaging on flyers and other materials into languages that are widely spoken within the local area. Nominal thank you payments are given to Champions for providing this support. The impact of this translation work has been that we have been able to develop materials in rapid timescales during emergency situations such as Covid-19 restriction changes announced at short notice. But critically, a by-product of this work has been that Champions often have a greater sense of ownership of the messaging and promote and disseminate this key messaging into 'hard to reach' communities. The local influence that certain stakeholders possess contributes to the impact of community translation work and in practice this has enhanced the impact of messaging within key communities.

4.4 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.4.1 There are a number of areas which we have identified for improvement:

- More representation of 'hard to reach' or underrepresented groups - the Local Government Association suggests making sure that the stakeholders you speak to are representative of the wider sample when it comes to faith, background, profession, disability, language needs etc. This includes a balance of generations represented within the forum.

- Coordination with partners and preventing over-engagement with the group – a number of public sector organisations are planning to do similar work and there is a need for greater alignment of this activity.
- Consistency – standardising the approach to working with champions within key areas of activity as much as possible.
- Avoiding the ‘echo chamber’ effect – regularly reviewing membership and ensuring that there is critical assessment of whether there is sufficient honesty and diversity of thought within the views represented.

4.4.2 In summary, there is an opportunity to expand the network in order to support more widespread impact for this work and likewise, scope to refine the engagement approach, including proactive collaboration with partners.

4.5 **BEST PRACTICE**

4.5.1 The Local Government Association New Conversation 2.0 guide sets out community engagement and cohesion best practice for Local Authorities. The guide recommends that Local Authorities engender such trust through the following activities:

- Developing and maintaining robust social networks, which extend into the heart of the community; a key aspect of these networks are ‘influencers’ who live in the community.
- Engaging on key topics with faith leaders and local influencers to enable greater reach into communities.
- Identifying influential local people within communities including representatives of charities, voluntary associations, resident groups and other organisations who are able to open the door to individuals who otherwise might remain at the periphery.

4.5.2 The guide goes on to suggest how to work with key parties in the community, by:

- Routinely gathering grass-roots insight as trust breaks down when communities feel the council does not grasp the reality on the ground.
- Giving a voice to community leaders.
- Communicating with key local stakeholders when a high-impact change is taking place.

4.5.3 The LGA’s Equality Framework defines best practice for Local Authorities in understanding and working with their communities as follows:

- Use of a whole council approach to the development of inclusive community engagement structures developed throughout the organisation.
- Providing opportunities for under-represented groups to engage with decision making.
- Holding shared engagement structures/mechanisms with partners and shared engagement activities with partners.

There is obvious and demonstrable cross over between equality, diversity and community cohesion.

4.6 **PROPOSED APPROACH**

4.6.1 It is proposed that we now work towards the best practice above by developing the structure and membership of the Community Champions Network through an approach which is designed to increase representation, improve consistency and provide clarity of purpose within the group and to put our partnership arrangements on a clearer footing.

Therefore It is proposed that we trial the opportunity for existing community champions and other local community stakeholders to take up bank roles within Peterborough City Council and through this mechanism remunerate them for time on specific activity listed below:

- 4.6.2
- Consultation support, including engaging and representing seldom heard voices
 - Providing insight into local issues and feedback on opportunities based on lived experience

- Translations
- Creating awareness raising videos in other languages and for the benefit of minority communities

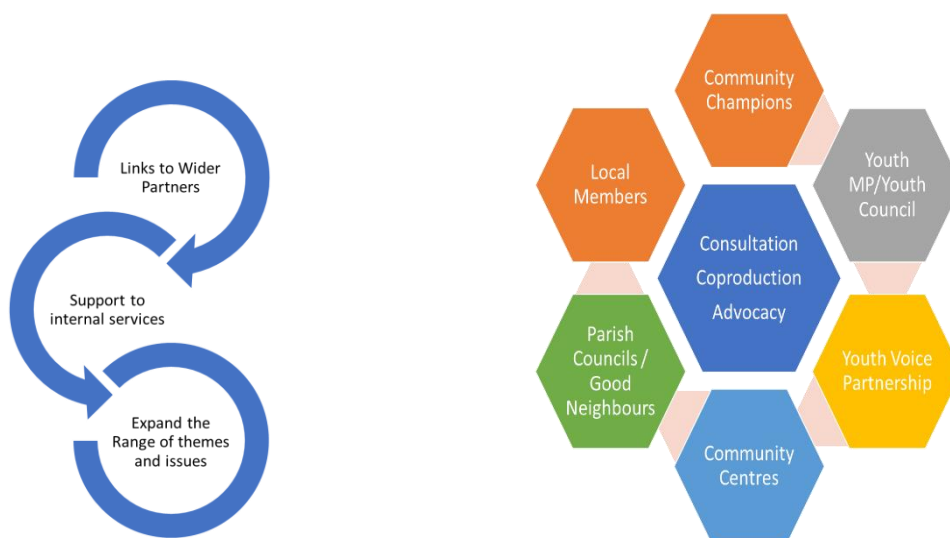
4.6.3 There is evidence for this way of working which is in use by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust's 'Digital and Community Engagement Specialist', and we feel that implementing this way of working will not only provide clarity for the champions, but also supports their interaction with other parts of the system such as Members and internal services and external partners.

4.6.4 We are proposing to trial this way of working for 12 months which will be supported, subject to funding being received, by a successful bid to the Integrated Care System designed to test out different ways of working with community champions.

4.6.5 The roles would be formally advertised and we would use 2021 Census data to support considerations of reflectiveness of the communities present within the local population. The criteria for recruitment would incorporate evidenced experience of grassroots work within the community, local knowledge and relevant networks within the community. Reimbursement would be facilitated by payroll processes, thereby improving the sustainability of this approach.

4.6.6 We will also mainstream the use of training and information webinars to support the consistency of messaging and the ability to be able to be efficient and effective in our ability to be able to consult and co-produce around specific pieces of work. The most recent webinar has been to disseminate information around the cost of living crisis, access to citizens advice tools and the household support fund.

4.6.7 Fig. 3 shows the interrelationship between community champions and other community engagement within the communities team which aims to support links to partners and services to promote cohesion.



4.6.8 The developing community champions network will work alongside other growing consultation and coproduction spaces including the Youth MP and Youth Council which continues to build in numbers and now branched out to develop a city wide youth voice partnership, our developing relationship with Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough and the Parish Council Liaison group, and as well as this the team intend to strengthen relationships with groups running our local community centres and ensure that Members are linked in to this work.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with our existing community champions who have fed back to us that they are supportive of this approach in that it recognises their contribution for time given, their skills and knowledge.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 According to Local Government Association guidance, key benefits of this way of working are that co-production with local stakeholders is likely to:
1. broaden trust and make it more likely that local people (both those engaged and those whose needs are incorporated or reflected within coproduced policies), will adhere to government policies
 2. put the council in a better position to work with residents, and channels to reach beyond those who are well-versed or well-connected
 3. create more engaged and capable societies, with higher collective efficacy

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 We would ask for scrutiny's consideration and endorsement to develop the approach set out in the report both for their valued input and guidance, awareness of the work of the community champions and in the context of the background documents.
- Public Sector Equality Duty
 - LGA new conversation Guide
 - Local Government Equality Framework

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Doing nothing and continuing to employ the existing approach.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 Funding required to pilot this approach has been secured via the Integrated Care System (we have email indicating that we have been successful in this bid, but are awaiting drawdown of funding)

Legal Implications

- 9.2 N/A

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 Work in this area is well understood to have a positive impact on equalities as these recommendations entail further development of our approach to enacting the aims within the Public Sector Equality duty and improving how we engage with local underrepresented groups.

Rural Implications

- 9.4 N/A

Carbon Impact Assessment

- 9.5 It is expected that this proposal will cause a slight increase in emissions due to increased travel. However this is likely to be minimal as local community stakeholders are likely to live within the local area. It is also expected that online meetings will be used in some scenarios, therefore

limiting carbon emissions.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 emphasises that a public authority must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation. Moreover, it states, that a public authority must seek to foster good relations between groups protected under the Equality Act. [Public sector equality duty - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/public-sector-equality-duty)

Local Government Association's New Conversation 2.0 Guide (2019) - [New Conversations: LGA guide to engagement | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-online-hub/public-service-reform-tools/engaging-citizens-devolution-7)

Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) 2021. [Equality Framework for Local Government | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/equality-framework-local-government-eflg-2021#understanding-and-working-with-your-communities)

Principles for co-production of guidance relating to the control of COVID-19 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954977/op0001-principles-co-production-guidance-covid-19.pdf

LGA Co-production guidance - <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-online-hub/public-service-reform-tools/engaging-citizens-devolution-7>

LGA Tool: Six key steps in campaign co-production - https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Six%20key%20steps%20in%20campaign%20co%20production_2.pdf

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/equality-framework-local-government-eflg-2021#understanding-and-working-with-your-communities>

11. APPENDICES

11.1 None