

REPORT TITLE: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE STRATEGY

2 DECEMBER 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Kathleen Becker, Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This draft strategy sets out the council's approach to building strong and resilient communities. This will be achieved through both its own place-shaping and capacity building activity, and through the fostering of an environment where communities can grow, evolve and solve their own challenges.

To help focus efforts of both the council and the wider Winchester district community, five pathways are proposed in the strategy:

1. A sense of place and belonging
2. Strong governance and local voice
3. An independent and empowered sector
4. A better life for people who face the toughest circumstances
5. Connected and informed communities

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Committee is asked to note the draft Community Resilience Strategy and comment on the content, with particular reference to the following questions.
  - a) Does the strategy reflect the issues that impact on the resilience of the communities you represent?
  - b) Are the proposed pathways and principles comprehensive and do they address the issues? (see 2.7).
  - c) What measures could we use to monitor and demonstrate the success of the strategy?

## 1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 The evidence base that supports the draft Community Resilience Strategy was developed by consultants Temple Group, thanks to funding secured from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 1.2 Delivery of this strategy involves primarily enabling and supporting communities and organisations across the district, so it is expected that the council's actions to deliver the strategy will come from existing resources. Working with partners, stakeholder and communities may provide the opportunity to apply for external funding and grants to support specific projects or groups.

## 2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

### Background

- 2.1 The UK and its communities have faced unprecedented challenges in recent years; these include the COVID-19 pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis and an accelerating climate crisis. These challenges have impacted communities and individuals in a variety of ways, felt most keenly by those least able to manage.
- 2.2 The draft Community Resilience Strategy (see appendix 1) takes its lead from the Council Plan chapter on 'Healthy Communities' and sets out the steps that the council can take to enhance community resilience across the district.
- 2.3 The Council recognises the vital role that is played by 'community' in all its senses, so the strategy sets a framework for how the council will both deliver services and work collaboratively with others to create communities that can thrive in both good and bad times.

### The Strategy

- 2.4 The strategy (section 2.3.8) sets out the following definition of resilience in the context of our communities:

***"Resilience is the capacity for individuals and communities to respond to and overcome shocks or challenges. It is underpinned by personal and community wellbeing, which creates the capacity to transcend challenges".***
- 2.5 The links between resilience and wellbeing are clearly identified and the strategy identifies a core set of factors that directly influence levels of personal resilience and wellbeing. A number of these factors can be classified as 'enabling infrastructure' and include housing, income, transport, crime, employment, education, physical and mental health, and environmental quality. The council's role in these areas is given strategic direction by existing key policy documents, so this strategy does not explore those aspects in any greater detail. The remaining factors are classified as 'social capital and support networks'.

- 2.6 Despite many years of this work, supporting communities across the district, the council has never had a strategy to provide clear direction. This new strategy fills that gap and has been informed by various other council documents and by local, regional and national policy and legislation. Engagement with local people, elected representatives and organisations has helped ensure a local context.
- 2.7 The strategy sets out five pathways and a series of associated principles, by which to build social capital and create stronger, more resilient communities.
- (i) **A sense of place and belonging**
    - Promote and celebrate local identity and pride in place
    - Celebrate diversity and promote inclusion
    - Secure, protect, support and promote the use of key community assets
    - Activate and utilise under-used public spaces, such as schools or churches, for wider community activity
  - (ii) **Strong governance and local voice**
    - An effective network of parish and town councils
    - Voluntary sector representation as a strategic partner
    - Local involvement in emergency response
  - (iii) **An independent and empowered sector**
    - Grant funding and other support
    - Promotion and encouragement for volunteering
    - Collaboration with other stakeholders
  - (iv) **A better life for people who face the toughest circumstances**
    - React and respond to changing circumstances
    - Target effort to maximise impact
  - (v) **Connected and informed communities**
    - Networking and collaboration
    - Sharing of information, data and intelligence
    - Measuring and demonstrating the impact of community initiatives

Proposed next steps

- 2.8 Following comments from the Committee and final engagement with key stakeholders, the final version of the strategy will be brought forward for adoption by the council.
- 2.9 The principles detailed in the strategy are supported by ongoing work by officers from a number of council teams. Working with communities in an enabling role to increase their capacity will help advance our ambitions in all of these areas, but there are some where there appears to be greater opportunity to build and strengthen.
- a) The impending reorganisation of local government in Hampshire makes the role of parish and town councils ever more important as the most local level of democracy. Work is already underway to address the democratic deficit caused by the lack of a parish or town council for the town wards of Winchester, but there is also potential to work with existing parish and town councils to ensure they are fully prepared for the change and to embrace their role in a unitary world and the opportunities it presents them.
  - b) The council's Emergency Response Plan recognises the important role of communities to prepare, respond and recover to emergencies or other unexpected events. Several communities within the district have developed community resilience plans, which formalise the ways in which they work alongside statutory public bodies in responding to emergencies or other unexpected events, as part of a wider multi-agency response. Working alongside colleagues in the Local Resilience Forum, a suite of community resilience related plans has been recently developed, including a handbook for residents which could be used to engage with parishes and residents to further strengthen community preparedness.
  - c) Targeted support for key community assets such as community centres and village halls to help them thrive and succeed as a focal point for community life.
  - d) Grant funding and other support to our voluntary and community sector allows them to build on existing assets and strengths to meet the needs of people in the district. At a time of increasing pressure on public sector resources, we can focus even harder to ensure that our grant funding is used as effectively as possible and brings maximum benefit.
  - e) Recent work with Hampshire County Council's Public Health team has seen us identify a series of health priorities to address health inequalities in the district. Led by those findings and the associated data, we can look to target efforts more systematically at the areas where they are needed the most to ensure that we are helping the people who face the toughest circumstances. We have recently established a community network of agencies operating in Stanmore and intend to work with partners to strengthen the impact of our collective efforts.
- 2.10 The strategy included in appendix 1 is the full, detailed version. A shorter, more concise version will be developed that is easier to read and will be the primary public-facing document for residents and other stakeholders.

## Conclusion

- 2.11 The strategy identifies key pathways through which the Council can cultivate a more resilient and thriving community through 2030 and beyond. By embracing a collaborative, community-centric approach that builds on existing engagement structures and partnerships, we can make significant strides in strengthening communities and enhancing wellbeing across the district.
- 2.12 The pathways set out in the strategy to build social capital and create stronger, more resilient communities require long-term commitment to yield the greatest benefits. However, we will continue to address immediate challenges through short-term interventions that will also yield significant benefits.
- 2.13 Following recent national developments, the strategy will be deployed amidst local government reorganisation and the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Hampshire and the Solent. For Winchester, whilst the structure of the public bodies who have the ability to deliver services in support of these drivers, will shift and change over the coming years, the role of communities has never been more important, and the key drivers of community resilience will remain the same.
- 2.14 Through the strategy, we have established a clear framework for improved community resilience across the district. By working together with our communities, we can build a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient Winchester for all.

## 3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 3.1 The council could choose not to adopt a Community Resilience Strategy. Work could continue but would do so without an approved set of principles that ensure consistency of approach across all council departments and recognise the importance of a strong, resilient community sector in delivering our Council Plan objectives.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

### Previous Committee Reports:

6 July 2021 - HEP012 - COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING STRATEGY UPDATE

### Other Background Documents:

None

## APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Draft Community Resilience Strategy