



#### Committee and Date

Environment and Services  
Scrutiny Committee

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 2.00pm

#### Item

**7**

Public

## **The changing role and focus of the Community Enablement Team**

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Community Enablement Team (CET) provides essential support to enable Shropshire Council to deliver its current and future programmes of work, often in partnership with communities, town and parish councils and other organisations.
- 1.2 Within the team there is a strong ownership of an enterprising approach and a desire for change, to work in different ways and with different people. The team is full of experience, high levels of skills in many areas, a strong knowledge of communities and a confidence of working within the political arena. This is a unique resource that can be maximised to generate income and add value to Shropshire's priority areas of work.
- 1.3 The CET needs to balance its existing core work, described above, which is highly valued, with new externally funded commercial activity. The CET Service Plan and Business Plan describe how this will be achieved. Actions within the Plans include -
  - Aligning the priorities of the CET with Shropshire Council's high-level outcomes around Healthy People, Resilient Communities, Prosperous Economy and the Operation of the Council
  - Designing and delivering a training and development programme for the CET to develop commercialism and enterprise skills and confidence, and to build expertise in our key areas of activity
  - Reviewing the CET to develop and deliver specialist knowledge in key areas, e.g. building social action, place shaping, member support, developing the council's volunteering offer, whilst retaining place based working
  - Considering bringing other community focussed officers into the CET to extend areas of specialism and increase support for place based working

### **2. Recommendations**

That members provide scrutiny on the report and offer further ideas for the team to consider over the next 12 months.

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

RISKS	MITIGATING ACTION
Further savings to the CET need to be made in the coming years, over and above what is set out in the current Financial Strategy	Maintain close working relationship with Finance Business Partner. Plan to generate higher levels of income than agreed savings targets.
There are unpredicted changes to the team personnel leading to a skills and knowledge gap	Avoid 'single point of failure' scenarios within the team. Ensure that all team members have equal access to training and development opportunities. Consider 'succession planning' when possible. Ensure systems are in place to share specific knowledge.
Team members unable to respond effectively to the evolution of the team due to lack of skills and knowledge or a reluctance to culture change	Development of service and business plans and training and development plan is co-produced. Team culture of regular 1:1s and team meetings remain an opportunity for concerns to be raised..

OPPORTUNITIES	MITIGATING ACTION
The Community Enablement Team has a Service Plan and a Business Plan in place, which have strong ownership from team members. The 3-year Business Plan has been considered and agreed	The plans are living documents that inform the work of all members of the team and provide a sense of shared purpose that enables success and satisfaction
Shropshire Council's Arts Officer has recently joined the CET and there is an opportunity to consider bringing other community focussed officers into the service to extend areas of specialism and increase support for place based working	This positive development should lead to communities benefitting from officers working together to share skills and knowledge in the delivery of new initiatives
The strong network of partnerships established in Shropshire and supported by the CET creates a collaborative culture. Effective community leadership, e.g. by local members creates a strong foundation for the co-design of new ways of working	As new policies and approaches to creating sustainable service solutions are created the CET is best placed, with local members, to introduce these to communities and explore the opportunities for implementing them
The CET can use its local knowledge, networks, individual skills and training to support colleagues and partners to connect with	The team must continue to build and strengthen the

communities and feel confident in building their capacity to support new ways of working	connections it makes between communities and the council and ensure that the result of this connection is mutually beneficial
In these uncertain times, the CET promotes the diversity of people living and working in Shropshire – recognising and challenging discrimination, prejudice or inequality	The positive promotion of equalities and diversity will be a key principle of the team cutting through all areas of its work.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Community Enablement Team has a controllable budget of £713,580 in 2016/17. The Financial Strategy has confirmed that the Council will continue to be the CET's primary funding source from 2017 – 2019 with £75,450 savings to be achieved in 2017/18.
- 4.2 The CET recognises the importance of becoming more entrepreneurial and generating additional income from a range of sources, and wants to be at the forefront of the council's enterprising activity.
- 4.3 In 2016/17, through the application of an entrepreneurial approach the CET has secured additional external funding of approximately £10,000. The external activity that has generated this income includes a part time secondment to a town council, completion of patient surveys for SATH, the appraisal of LEADER applications, 1:1 mentoring, Grantfinder licence fee contributions and equipment hire.
- 4.4 The majority of CET's 2017/18 funding gap will be met through the generation of additional income. The CET, therefore, views the majority of the funding gap not as a savings target but as an income generation target.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 The Community Enablement Team came into being as part of the creation of Shropshire Council as a unitary authority in 2009. Over the years the team has been alive to the need to evolve and flex with the council and to ensure that it was always best placed to support elected members, officers, partners and communities. Leaders of the team have ensured that it has worked hard to establish its purpose – responding to feedback it has received – and to clearly communicate this to others.
- 5.2 In early 2016 as the funding forecast for the Council worsened, it became apparent that the CET, along with other services, was vulnerable and at risk of not being able to be supported from 2017 onwards. The leadership team of the CET considered options for the future viability of the team and concluded that the route of using the resources within the team to generate additional income to offset the team's costs to the Council was the one to take. This proposal was shared with the rest of the team and it was agreed that a CET Business Plan would be created setting out the potential for income generation and the actions that needed to be taken to achieve this.
- 5.3 The CET received a great deal of support during this time of uncertainty from a range of areas including Shropshire Council members, town and parish councils and communities. Knowing that this support was present was extremely motivating and encouraged the team to think positively about how it could evolve and change in ways that would enable its valued existing work to continue and new areas of work to develop that would generate income and provide sustainability.

- 5.4. The CET Business Plan is an internal operational document and was finalised in September 2016 and this was quickly followed by the creation of the team's Service Plan and a training and development programme. All of these documents have been co-produced with members of the team who continue to be involved in their development.
- 5.5. The team has been acutely aware of the balance that needs to be struck between the continued delivery of its existing core activity and creating the capacity to deliver new, externally funded work. A thorough assessment of the team's activity has been undertaken and through this it has been established which are the areas of work that bring the greatest value to the Council and to communities. This work has become the priority for the team and is aligned to the Council's high-level outcomes as described in the Corporate Plan.
- 5.6. The CET Business Plan sets out the new areas of the activity that the team believes it is well placed to deliver and generate additional income. Small but significant pieces of work have already been delivered and these have built confidence and provided opportunities for learning. The team will build on this work incrementally in the coming years to ensure that the balance is kept between existing and new activity, whilst achieving its income generation target.
- 5.7. The CET is being extremely well supported by key officers within the council to develop the team as a whole and to successfully implement the Business Plan.

## **6. Current activity of the CET**

- Working with communities to build social capital and enable the social action that will build resilience and reduce dependency on public services
- Facilitating partnership and local governance structures, e.g. Local Joint Committees, and acting as an action and information link between town and parish councils to secure a sustainable future for locally delivered services - supporting their redesign and transfer into community management
- Supporting Shropshire Council's elected members in their role as community leaders
- Supporting infrastructure development through Community Led Planning, the development and review of Place Plan documents and project planning for Community Infrastructure Levy and Neighbourhood Fund by town and parish Councils
- The research, design and delivery of organisational solutions and community projects for public and voluntary sector organisations and community groups
- Co-ordinating and facilitating community safety partnerships and initiatives that promote equality and tackle hate crime
- Co-ordinating the Shropshire Armed Forces Community Covenant

## **7. Priorities for the CET as described in its Service Plan**

- 7.1 The priorities of the CET are aligned with Shropshire Council's high-level outcomes as described in the Corporate Plan. These are Healthy People, Resilient Communities, Prosperous Economy and the Operation of the Council.

### **Healthy People – Community Enablement Team activity**

- Supporting the redesign and commissioning of locally delivered services, and supporting the redesign of services and assets into sustainable community based management town

and parish councils and Shropshire Council and other agencies, organisations and statutory bodies

- Building community resilience, social capital and social action through the local delivery of Resilient Communities and as part of Shropshire's prevention work

#### **Resilient Communities - Community Enablement Team activity**

- Building community resilience, social capital and social action through the local delivery of Resilient Communities and as part of Shropshire's prevention work
- Facilitating and supporting local governance structures, e.g. Local Joint Committees, and community based partnerships
- Supporting Shropshire Council's elected members in their role as community leaders
- Co-ordinating and facilitating community safety partnerships and initiatives that promote equality and tackle hate crime
- Developing a brokerage role between people looking for work placements, work experience and volunteer placements and providers, including Shropshire Council
- Co-ordinating the Shropshire Armed Forces Community Covenant

#### **Prosperous Economy - Community Enablement Team activity**

- Supporting community led planning, the development and review of Place Plan documents and the spend of CIL Local and Neighbourhood Fund by town and parish councils
- Developing a brokerage role between people looking for work placements, work experience and volunteer placements and providers, including Shropshire Council

#### **Operation of the Council - Community Enablement Team activity**

- To become early adopters of the Council's entrepreneurial approach through the delivery of the CET business plan and deliver the CET savings/income target in 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- Design and deliver a training and development programme for the team to develop commercialism and enterprise skills and confidence, and build expertise in our key areas of activity
- Redesign the team as described in the CET Business Plan to develop and deliver specialist knowledge in key areas, e.g. building social action, member support, place shaping, developing the council's volunteering offer, whilst retaining place based working
- Identify and follow up opportunities for generating income through activity with existing and new partners
- Continue to adopt a flexible, mobile and agile working approach that maximises the technology available to us and reduces team expenditure on accommodation and travelling

### **8. Examples of identified areas of new commercial activity**

- Secondment of the Community Enablement Officers to partner organisations, e.g. town and parish councils
- Designing and delivering community engagement or consultations plus needs assessments and equality impact assessments
- Providing project development and management skills and expertise
- Facilitating the delivery of community led plans or Neighbourhood Plans
- Supporting economic growth initiatives by providing knowledge and extra capacity
- Co-ordination of the spend of local funds, e.g. solar farm betterment funds
- Delivery of training, facilitation of sessions, speaking at conferences
- Providing community development skills and expertise
- Working with groups to write funding applications that support their activity

- Brokerage of volunteer/ work experience placements

## **9. Team structure**

- 9.1 The CET is currently led by the Locality Commissioning Manager (LCM) with the support of 3 Senior Community Enablement Officers (SCEOs) – her direct reports. Each SCEO line manages an area team of 4 Community Enablement Officers (CEOs). A Support Assistant supports the team with the delivery of its work.
- 9.2 The Council's Arts Officer has recently joined the CET and is line managed by the LCM.
- 9.3 One of the unique characteristics of the CET is that each officer is place based and is able to create deep, strong and productive local relationships with elected members, stakeholders and communities, as well as facilitating Local Joint Committees.

## **10. Development of the team**

- 10.1 It is recognised that the successful delivery of the Service Plan and Business Plan is reliant on members of the CET being committed to a new way of working. The plans have been co-produced over a number of months by the team; therefore, it is in a strong position to successfully take them forward.
- 10.2 A programme of training and development activity has been put in place to support the team to move into a more commercial and enterprising mind-set and to provide the skills that will support this culture change and delivery. Co-production by the team of this programme and other developmental areas will remain a key principle of the way the team works.
- 10.3 There will also be a review of the current structure of the CET and the individual roles within the team to ensure that it is fit for its future purposes.
- 10.4 The recent move of the Arts Officer into the CET will extend the team's areas of specialism and increase resources for place based working as well as providing support for the Arts Service. Where there are opportunities for other officers working with communities to build capacity and deliver great outcomes to join the CET, these will be carefully considered.

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1 The CET is a valued service but it needs to become more sustainable by generating additional and external income. The majority of the team's 2017/18 funding gap of £76,450 is considered as its target for income generation, not as a savings target.
- 11.2 Any external activity needs to be balanced with the team's existing core work. The CET Service Plan and Business Plan, both of which have been co-produced by members of the team, set out how this will be achieved.
- 11.3 A review of the team roles and responsibilities will be undertaken, along with the delivery of a training and development programme to ensure that the developing team has the skills, knowledge and aptitude that will make it a success.
- 11.4 Opportunities for bringing other community focussed officers into the CET where it can be shown that this would be beneficial, should be considered.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

Shropshire Council Corporate Plan

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

Cllr Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Rural Services and Communities

**Local Member**

All

**Appendices**

CET Service Plan 2016/17