

Cabinet – 28 October 2020

Resilient Communities – Response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Overview Committee.

Portfolio: Councillor Perry, Deputy Leader, Resilient Communities.

Related portfolios: All

Service: Resilient Communities

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

- 1.1 To respond to the report of the Resilient Communities Working Group on Resilient Communities.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Overview Committee (SOC) received a report from its Resilient Communities Working group on the 28 July 2020, and subsequently presented to Cabinet at its meeting on the 9 September 2020.
- 2.2 Cabinet made the decision to note the report and receive a report responding to the recommendations at the next Cabinet meeting.
- 2.3 This report outlines the Council response to the recommendations of the working group.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet restates its commitment to a Resilient Communities Model to deliver the PROUD promises of improved customer experience, improved employee satisfaction and greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3.2 That Cabinet receives a further report in January 2021 on progress towards a Resilient Communities approach.

4. Report detail - know

4.1 At a meeting of the 23rd October 2020 Cabinet adopted a Resilient Communities approach. It was decided that

“Cabinet adopts the Model of Resilient Communities as a policy that drives the way the Council interacts with communities”

4.2 At a further meeting on the 18th December 2020 Cabinet decided that

“That Cabinet approve Resilient Communities Model as set out in paragraph 4.23 to 4.27 to deliver the PROUD promises of improved customer satisfaction, improved staff satisfaction and greater efficiency.”

4.3 The Cabinet decision in December 2019 was called in by the Scrutiny Overview Committee and reviewed at a special meeting on 13 January 2020. This meeting set up a working group to consider the model and report back.

4.4 The Scrutiny working group met with a wide range of stakeholders and presented its final report and recommendations to the Scrutiny Overview Committee on 28 July 2020.

4.5 The Working Group made the following recommendations, and responses are included below;

The implementation of the Resilient Communities model should be paused during the Coronavirus crisis to allow all Council resources to be focussed on assisting local residents.

The Resilient Communities model is having a strong and direct impact on both the Council's response to COVID-19 and the future operations of the Council. The approach has played a key role in the Making Connections Walsall delivery model and on a day to day basis the approach can be seen supporting communities in a difficult times. It is therefore not appropriate to pause it. Indeed more will be done with a Resilient Communities focus. It is correct to say that the report was written at a point in time but it also correct to say that since the report was finalised the reach of Resilient Communities has gone deeper and will continue.

Cabinet explain why formal consultation, in line with Council policy and practice, on the Resilient Communities model did not take place and how the decision to not undertake consultation was made.

Once the coronavirus crisis has passed, the Resilient Communities model should not be implemented until formal consultation, in line with Council policy and practice, has taken place.

The Resilient Communities paper will come back to Cabinet at some time in the future and consultation will be part of that report. It should be noted that in the report

to Cabinet on the 15/01/2020, it was made clear that there had been engagement with staff and partners. No formal consultation had taken place and formal consultation will be included in any decision making process. There will be appropriate consultation, where needed, as we progress through building the Resilient Communities model prior to finalisation of the Council's plans. Cabinet's position is that it expects a close and appropriate relationship with Walsall Together.

In order to avoid duplication, consideration should be given to significant collaboration between the Council's Resilient Communities model with the Resilient Communities model being developed by Walsall Together.

Constructive meetings have been held between the Walsall Together and representatives of the Resilient Communities team and the Walsall Community Network to ensure we maximise the strengths of both programmes of work. A new working relationship has been proposed which will ensure greater alignment moving forward. A representative of the Walsall Community Network have been invited to attend the next Walsall Together Board meeting,

Significantly more detail on the Resilient Communities model is required, specifically on:

- ***How the voluntary and community sector will be supported to achieve the vision including funding needs and an appreciation of the support needed in different localities;***
- ***How the proposed budget savings will be achieved, whilst maintaining service levels;***
- ***The role of elected Members at Community Forums;***
- ***How communities will be engaged in their localities on issues of strategic significance at Borough and regional level.***

The Community and voluntary sector network has delivered throughout the current pandemic and will continue to play a key role during the next phase of activity. The Council, in particular has worked through Making Connections Walsall programme to ensure that the sector remains strong. Work will continue to support the development of the VCS sector in Walsall both directly and through "One Walsall".

The current budget process for 2021/22 will consider options brought forward and Cabinet will be assured that the agreed budget will be deliverable. There will be both Policy and Operational decisions which will go through Cabinet with the final decision on the overall budget envelope sits with Council.

Community forums will be managed through "One Walsall". It is expected that members will be invited to attend the appropriate community forum.

It is expected that community forums will deal with matters of importance in the locality. It will be up to each forum to assess what is of importance and what is discussed. It is

expected that well run forums will deal with matters of strategic importance to their locality.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

4.6 A Resilient Communities approach will assist the Council across all of its corporate priorities. In particular the corporate priority of “Communities prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.” A confident and resilient community and VCS is the key to delivering this priority.

Risk management

4.7 The Resilient Communities is fundamental to the Council's future delivery plans. Appropriate engagement and consultation will play a key part in the development of the mode.

Financial implications

4.8 The original blueprint for resilient communities saving is £935,146, not being achieved in 20/21 and fully mitigated by covid-19 grant. This is being reviewed as part of the STP process and benefits relating to resilient communities will be identified from this process and will be included in future budget setting process.

Legal implications

4.9 There are no legal implications of this report.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.10 There are no procurement implications of this report.

Property implications

4.11 There are no property implications of this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.12 Safer communities are healthier communities. There are a number of Public Health outcomes related to Resilient Communities' young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), crime, domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse.

4.13 Specific priorities and monitoring health and well-being improvement will be identified in the Community Safety plan.

4.14 Resilient Communities will support the delivery of the Health and Well-being Board priority to reduce youth violence.

Staffing implications

4.15 There are no direct staffing implications of this report.

Reducing Inequalities

4.16 A resilient community plays a key role in reducing inequalities. A confident community identifying local solutions will challenge the most critical areas of need in their community.

Consultation

4.17 There are no Consultation implications of this report.

5. Decide

5.1 The Council will continue to further develop and implement its Resilient Communities model.

6. Respond

6.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on how the Council operates. The last eight months has seen the Resilient Communities approach deliver and the Council will continue to place Resilient Communities at the heart of what it does.

7. Review

7.1 Cabinet will receive a further Resilient Communities report in January 2021. In the meantime the resilient communities will continue to be utilised as it has proved to be an effective approach.

Background papers

Cabinet report dated 23rd October 2019

Cabinet report dated 18th December 2019

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22 October 2020

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22 October 2020