DRAFT EAST SUFFOLK ENABLING COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

Introduction

This Enabling Communities Strategy for East Suffolk sets out how Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council, together with their key partners in the East Suffolk Partnership will **enable** (literally 'make possible or easy') local people to deliver more within their communities, rather than doing things 'for' or 'to' them. Our approach is an **asset-based** one, which moves from a 'deficit' way of thinking (starting with problems and needs) to one which uses the full range of assets (people, buildings, networks, groups, resources, knowledge, interests and skills) that already exist within each community to create a sustainable and thriving East Suffolk.

The new Draft East Suffolk Business Plan (2015-2023) identifies three clear priorities for the Councils over the next eight years – growth, value for money and enabling communities. This Strategy therefore sits alongside the Business Plan, explains what we mean by 'Enabling Communities' and explores what this means for the way in which the two Councils work.

The Strategy builds upon an excellent 'enabling track record' (see page 5) of work with local residents and communities in both Districts to empower them to do things their way - shaping the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of East Suffolk and making local services more effective and efficient. We will build on this track record by trusting individuals and communities to take more responsibility, putting local communities at the heart of all we do.

Resilient and sustainable communities

We want East Suffolk communities to be vibrant, sustainable, resilient and able to help themselves. A **sustainable** community is one that is safeguarded for future generations – which is likely to mean evolving/changing to meet the needs of those future generations.

A **resilient** community is one that is strong, resistant and quick to recover from setbacks. Research by Carnegie UK and Fiery Spirits has identified four key dimensions of resilient communities:

- Healthy and engaged people
- An inclusive culture which creates a positive sense of place
- Looks after its land, food, water, energy, services, jobs and housing
- Strong links to other places and communities – because 'no place can go it alone'

Our approach to enabling communities is a holistic one which considers all aspects of what makes a community strong but balanced, including affordable housing, access to health services and a thriving economy, including a good match between local skills and local jobs.

We have therefore developed our own Resilience Mapping Tool (see page 8) which can be used to check how resilient the members of a community think it is at any point in time.

Put most simply, our ambition as an Enabling East Suffolk is to provide the necessary support to **'help communities to help themselves'**. Through our Enabling Communities Strategy, we will enable communities to 'own' the issues that are most important for their local area and which have the biggest impact on local people's lives. We want communities to have more say about and control over their own area by working in partnership with us to deliver services, taking over/running services, and telling us how well services are working for individuals, families and the community as a whole.

We believe that the best way to empower people to invest time and energy in making the area where they live or work better, is by asking them what they most want to do and enabling them to achieve it. We recognise that community priorities may not be the same things that service providers (including health organisations and councils) currently think are most important.

We will work together (integrate) with our partners in local government (Town and Parish Councils and the County Council), and with health, education, police, business and voluntary sector partners, to help communities to tackle their key issues. We will ensure that the right people provide the right help, information and advice at the right time, reducing duplication wherever possible. We need to make the system simpler – for everyone - and ensure that we use all of the resources available to East Suffolk, including its people, to maximum effect.

Two years ago Suffolk Coastal District Council successfully introduced its Enabling Communities Strategy. One way in which this strategy is delivered in the District is through Community Enabling Grants, funded through the New Homes Bonus. Each Councillor has a budget which allows them to fund projects in their wards which make a real difference to people's lives, enabling the Councillors to work alongside residents to deliver improvements at a grass roots level – changing places for the better.

An 'asset based' approach to enabling

This doesn't mean that councils, health organisations and the police will not support communities – instead our role will be an 'enabling' one – helping to build the skills and knowledge of communities to **do more for themselves, rather having things done 'for' or 'to' them**. This approach means that these skills, and the confidence to apply them, remain in the community - even if public services move on to support other communities.

This contrasts with the usual approach, which focuses on the needs and problems (the deficits) within a community, rather than its potential. The tendency is to identify a range of problems and jump straight to designing services that 'fix' or 'solve' them without understanding the full range of resources that already exist within communities – and the fact that services may not be the solution at all.

Through our Enabling Communities approach, rather than 'what's wrong?', the starting point will be **'what's strong?'**.

We want to use the assets (people, buildings, networks, groups, resources, knowledge, interests and skills) that already exist within communities to their full potential. This includes working with existing community champions or activists who already have a wide range of skills, plus the enthusiasm that is vital to get things going.

Once existing community assets are understood, we can help communities to identify local needs and problems, to understand the gap between community assets and community needs, prioritise needs and, ultimately, develop and prioritise local solutions to these needs.

We recognise that some communities will need more help and support than others to help themselves (and that some communities do not need or want our help at all). There are lots of good examples of community solutions that are cheaper, more effective and deliver better outcomes - end results - for local people and places.

What do we mean by 'communities'?

We recognise that people belong to lots of 'communities' at the same time and that within each geographical community, also sometimes called a 'community of place', there will be various communities of 'interest'. Communities of interest are groups, communities or individuals who are linked by similar passions or interests - for example farming, a church or an on-line forum - or by similar circumstances/ characteristics, for example being lesbian/gay, a young mum or having impaired hearing.
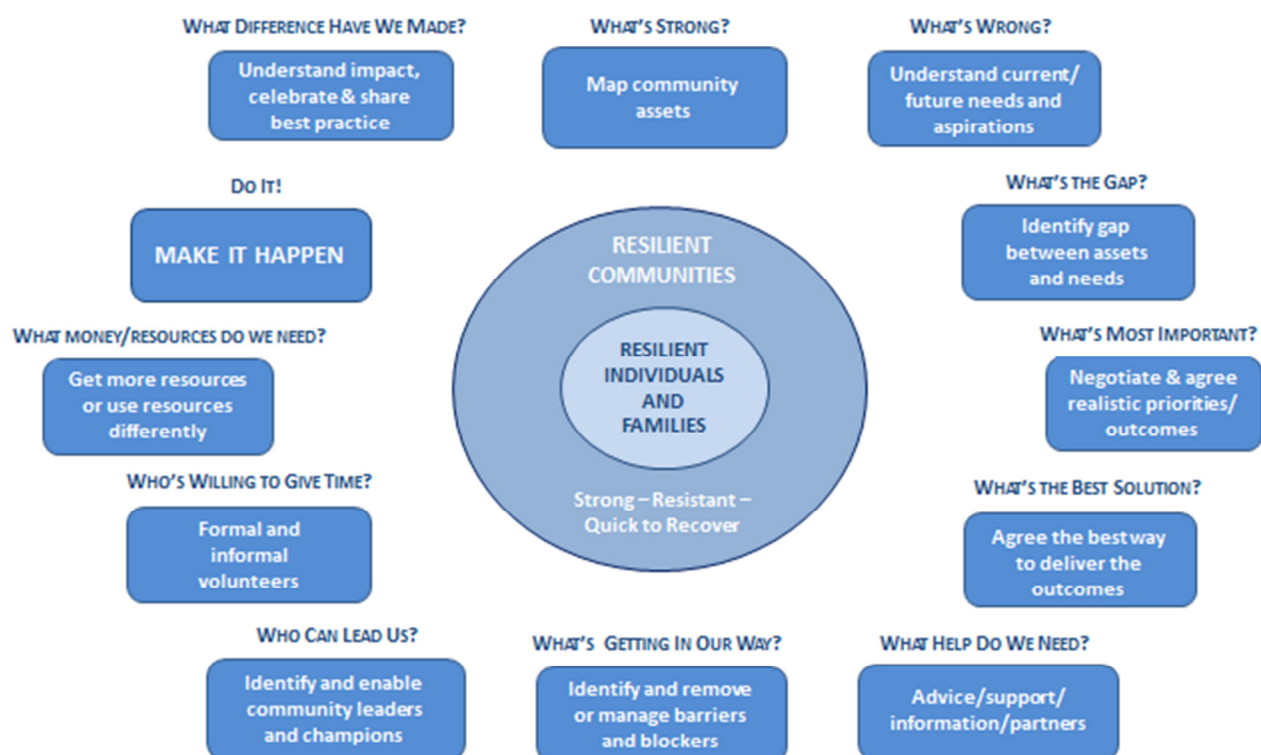
When we are working with communities of place we will encourage them to consider all communities of interest within that community and vice versa.

The East Suffolk Enabling Communities model

The Enabling Communities model on the following page sets out ten steps that will enable communities to identify and deal with one or more problems and challenges by using the full range of their local assets. These assets include community champions, local skills and community networks. This model provides a framework for enabling communities in East Suffolk to be more resilient - **strong, resistant and quick to recover from setbacks**.

The effectiveness of the model depends on communities being able to access the right support (if and when they need it) from the right organisation at the right time. Each of the steps therefore has its own 'enablers' - the organisations, people or things that can help to make them happen (see page 6). These 'enablers' are identified in detail in the Delivery Plan that accompanies the strategy.

However, the biggest 'enabler' at each step of the model is always communities – and the community leaders within communities - themselves.

WHAT DIFFERENCE HAVE WE MADE?

Understand impact, celebrate & share best practice

WHAT'S STRONG?

Map community assets

WHAT'S WRONG?

Understand current/ future needs and aspirations

DO IT!

MAKE IT HAPPEN

WHAT'S THE GAP?

Identify gap between assets and needs

WHAT MONEY/RESOURCES DO WE NEED?

Get more resources or use resources differently

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

RESILIENT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

Strong – Resistant – Quick to Recover

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT?

Negotiate & agree realistic priorities/ outcomes

WHO'S WILLING TO GIVE TIME?

Formal and informal volunteers

WHAT'S THE BEST SOLUTION?

Agree the best way to deliver the outcomes

WHO CAN LEAD US?

Identify and enable community leaders and champions

WHAT'S GETTING IN OUR WAY?

Identify and remove or manage barriers and blockers

WHAT HELP DO WE NEED?

Advice/support/ information/partners

East Suffolk Enabling Communities Model

Community support for individuals and families

90% of public money is spent on services for the 10% of individuals and families who need most support – also sometimes described as 'vulnerable people'. This vulnerability is normally due to a combination of things - for example a frail older person, isolated because they have no family support and live in a rural area or an unemployed young person who turns to drink or drugs because of a particular life event, for example a bereavement. These people are less 'resilient' – less able to cope with the life events that they face.

Communities are ideally placed to identify the individuals and families who are least resilient and most in need of help and support. Where people are vulnerable, the best support is provided by the organisations, groups and people in their own community, which means that they can get the help that they need sooner. Communities have a vital role to play in working with us to protect and support vulnerable people, keeping them safe and free from harm, both in their own homes and in the wider community.

Most of the time people will not ask for help until a problem has become too much for them to handle on their own and so we want to encourage and support people to get help earlier i.e. before their problems get serious (early intervention) and help people to 'help themselves' so that more serious problems can be avoided (prevention).

Ultimately, we want people to make positive life choices and to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to look after their own physical and mental health. This includes effectively managing long term conditions such as diabetes, dementia, depression, heart disease and arthritis, not putting themselves or others at risk and looking out for and after each other.

Evidence of our enabling approach

Examples of recent enabling activity across Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Districts includes:

- Support for neighbourhood, town and parish plans and village reviews
- Transfer of Council assets (including play parks, allotments, buildings, countryside sites and common land) to community and voluntary sector groups – recent transfers include Beccles Lido, the Marina Theatre in Lowestoft and Kessingland Play Park
- Support for communities to list assets of community value under the 'Community Right to Bid' – one asset, the Tramway Hotel in Pakefield, has been listed in Waveney and seventeen in Suffolk Coastal, including Stone Common Allotments in Blaxhall, the Admirals Head Public House in Little Bealings, The Angel Centre in Rendlesham and the Police Station in Saxmundham
- Support for Housing Needs Surveys with the aim of identifying specific local housing needs in individual East Suffolk communities
- Working with the County Council and other partners to support place-based working in Lowestoft (Lowestoft Rising), Felixstowe (Felixstowe Forward) and Leiston (Leiston Forward)
- Facilitating key 'conversations' in communities, including through community mediation - for example to ensure a joined up approach to developing the train station in Saxmundham as a community asset
- Supporting more than 300 grass-roots projects through the Suffolk Coastal Enabling Communities grants
- Work with specific communities of interest, including young people (e.g. through the Waveney Youth Council), people with disabilities and older people (including the Ageing Well Kirkley Navigators project in Kirkley)

Resources to enable communities

The active leadership of councillors is essential for the successful delivery of the Enabling Communities Strategy. Ward councillors have a crucial role as community leaders and ambassadors in identifying, engaging, inspiring, representing and supporting community activists and champions – also sometimes described as the 'fiery spirits' in each community – but also in helping to ensure that all voices within a community are heard.

Councillors will work with communities to identify their assets and needs and help them to access the relevant 'enablers' when they need help or get stuck on any of the steps shown

in the model. These 'enablers' include a network of officers who have 'community development' or 'community capacity building' as part of their role, for example staff from the County and District Councils, Community Action Suffolk and other voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, and some Parish Clerks. These officers will support Councillors in their role as community leader and work with key people and groups within communities, helping them to do things for themselves.

Officers from different departments within the District and County Councils, plus other public (including the Clinical Commissioning Groups), voluntary sector organisations and, increasingly, the private sector, can also provide more specialist advice and guidance. This advice could relate to themes such as economic development, planning, highways, housing, coast and flood management, tourism, public health, resort and countryside management, voluntary sector structures, education, social business models and many more, depending on the priorities identified by each individual community.

The East Suffolk Partnership (ESP) - www.eastsuffolkpartnership.org.uk - is well placed to influence, inform and support a more co-ordinated approach to enabling communities through the enabling 'agents' identified above and through its Board, the East Suffolk Resource Network and annual ESP Forum.

Local and national powers and tools

There are a range of local and national powers, tools and resources that may help communities to achieve their aspirations. Examples of these include:

Tools
- Community-led Planning, including neighbourhood planning
- Community Right to Build
- Community Right to Challenge
- Community Right to Bid
- Housing Needs Assessments/Surveys

Powers
- Sustainable Communities Act powers
- Right to Reclaim Land
- Community Infrastructure Levy

Resources
- Community Asset Transfer
- Community Shares
- Suffolk Foundation
- Community Grants, including Enabling Communities budgets
- SCC INFOLINK

The focus of any help and support provided to communities through Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils will be on building the skills and capacity of the community and ensuring that these skills are retained within the community for future projects.

Communities do (and will in the future) approach us for support with a diverse range of projects – from securing and running a valued community asset to increasing the skills of the local population, securing a site for a scheme of affordable housing for local people or setting up a project to support people with dementia and their carers. This Strategy, and the East Suffolk Enabling Communities model, provide a framework for the support that can be provided by the Councils and their partners.

Delivering the East Suffolk Enabling Communities Strategy

The implementation of this Enabling Communities Strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan (which is available as an early draft, subject to further discussion with the agencies named within it, who may not have signed up to/endorsed it yet).

The Delivery Plan is itself supported by a Toolkit (also available as an early draft), which provides brief information about different tools and techniques that could be used at each of the different stages of the Enabling Communities Model. This is a live document that will be regularly added to and updated.

Finally, the Strategy will be accompanied by a Communication and Engagement Plan which will set out how we will identify and agree the communities that we will work with – ensuring that we do not just work with those who shout the loudest, but target our support so that is has maximum impact.

East Suffolk Resilience Map

1 = We need to do much, much better in this area [fearful & fragile]
2 = We could improve a lot in this area [struggling & worried]
3 = We're doing OK in this area but could still be better [coping & secure]
4 = We are good at this/good in this area [positive & developing]
3 = We're excellent at this/in this area [thriving & excelling]

Healthy People – happy and fit in mind and body

Healthy Community

Young People (15-24)

Adults (25-65)

Children (0-14)

Older People (65+)

Inclusive

Engagement

Creative Culture

Creative

Links

We work with and learn from others

Community Leaders

Housing

Services

Transport

Land

Jobs

Tourism

East Suffolk Resilience Map

Look After Resources - strong local economy

Adapted from the Carnegie UK and Fiery Spirits Community of Practice publication 'Exploring Community Resilience'