

Communities Consultation, launched 25 January 2023

Background

The Think Communities service incorporates the County Council's Strengthening Communities and Youth in Communities Teams to meet the aims of the Think Communities approach, joining systems together in a placed based way and putting people at the heart of solutions to local issues. The service has been successful in achieving its aims, however due to time-limited funding which expires in March 2023 and organisational pressures, we need to re-shape the service to ensure that we have a sustainable offer for our communities for the future.

The total amount of time-limited, transformation funding from the council was £1.354m. This included funding for the Cultivate Cambridgeshire Fund and the community engagement vehicle, both of which the council is proposing to cease operating. This transformation funding enabled the council to put in place the new roles of Place Coordinator and Community Connector which then worked alongside other colleagues to co-ordinate, enable and support work with our districts, local councils, public sector partners and the community voluntary sector. As a result of this funding stream coming to an end, we need to consider how we can reinvest in this service to ensure future sustainability.

Given the council's overall financial position we are not able to re-invest the same level of funding to retain the service as it is now. Whilst this is the case, we are proposing an investment of £380k into the Communities Service by making savings elsewhere in the council. This is because we know this is a vital area of work for the council and we want to do all we can to deliver the strongest response to this challenging set of circumstances.

Alongside addressing these financial challenges, we are taking this opportunity to re-shape our Communities Service so that it aligns to our Libraries and Skills offer, who have been moved to sit alongside our Communities Service, to leverage more resource to focus on the council's objectives to tackle inequality, improve lives, and care for the environment. This supports the strengthening of our place-based approach to help us deliver on the council's ambitions for us to work with colleagues and partners on working together to support our residents across Cambridgeshire, particularly those who are experiencing hardship through the cost-of-living crisis.

The Communities Service formal staff consultation launched on January 25th for a period of 30 days and will end on February 24th, 2023. The full consultation paper has been shared with affected staff and Trade Union representatives, outlining in detail the proposed structures, implications for individual jobs roles, the process, support available and applicable policies and procedures.

This paper provides an overview of our proposals for a wider audience of colleagues across the council and partner organisations.

Current structure

The current Think Communities service includes roles within two distinct teams – Strengthening Communities and Youth in Communities and is led by the Head of Think Communities, a shared role with Peterborough City Council.

Two management roles report to the Head of Think Communities, the Think Communities (Strengthening Communities) Area Manager and Youth in Community Manager. In turn, these roles oversee the countywide delivery for services from the Strengthening Communities and Youth in Communities teams.

Youth in Communities supports the development of a youth offer for Cambridgeshire by working in partnership with those working with young people at a local level. The team includes the Youth Community Coordinators, the National Citizen Service Team and the Youth Voice and Youth Engagement partnership. The Youth in Communities team also ensures that the county council meets its statutory requirement to provide a Sufficient Youth Offer.

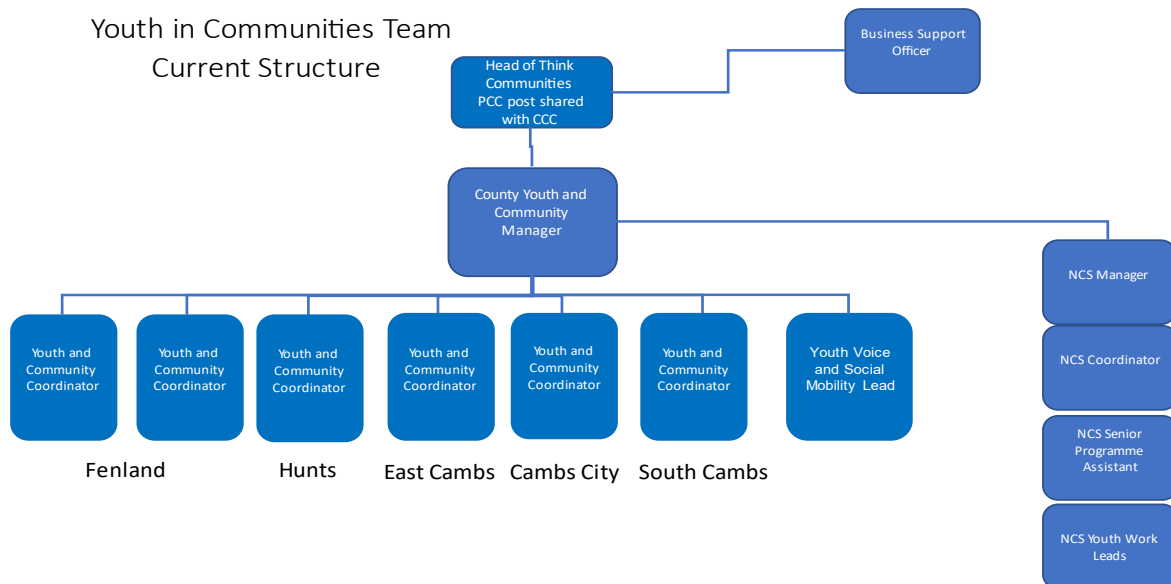
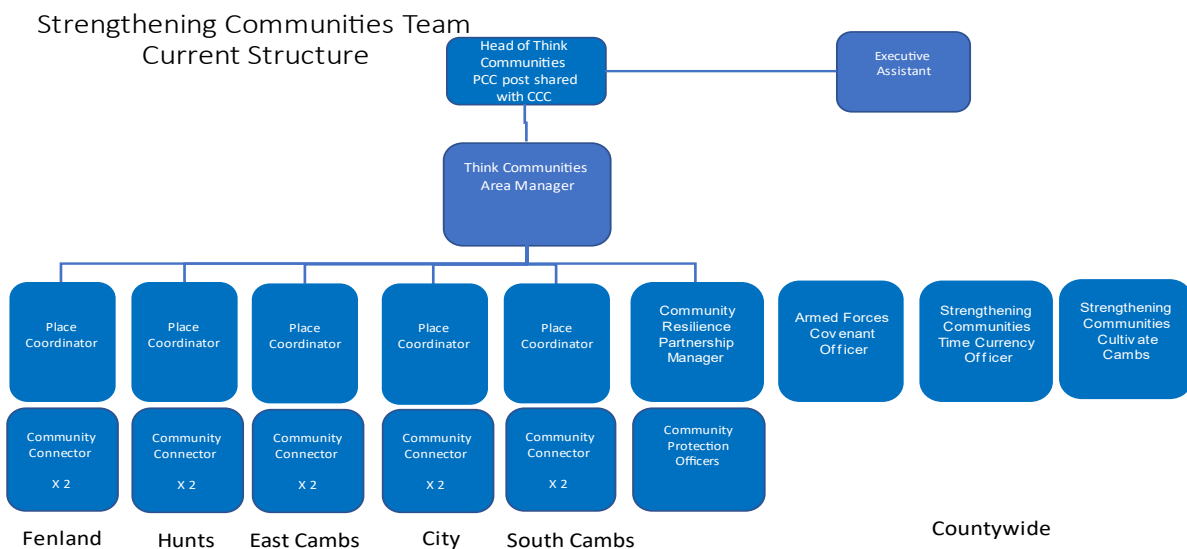
Our Place-based Coordinators and Connectors act as frontline advocates for Strengthening Communities. To achieve our service goals, these roles create a detailed picture of all our community needs and are locally based within

communities. They explore what services are needed in communities to support people to live improved lives. They bring together and work with partners including community groups to provide a collective support offer.

Our Community Resilience and Protection (focusing upon scams), Time Credits and Armed Forces Covenant work is managed and delivered by roles within the Strengthening Communities service.

Apart from posts with a countywide remit, roles are place based at a district level with staff located in Fenland, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. This enables the service to engage at a local level with communities and partners.

Current structure charts for the Strengthening Communities and Youth in Communities teams:



Proposed Communities Service structure

In developing our proposals, several key principles were taken into consideration, aligned to the county council’s ambitions. We want to ensure that the Communities Service is fit for the future to play its part appropriately in the Cambridgeshire system and therefore the changes put forward are focused upon:

1. Developing a structure which supports effective working at a local level through geographical alignment with the governance and organisational structures of partners (for example, District and City local authorities and the Integrated Care System).
2. Integration of the Youth in Communities and Strengthening Communities Team to maximise the use of staff skills, knowledge and experience and to minimise duplication around community development work, taking a more holistic approach to how we work with families and communities.
3. Alignment of our delivery to support achievement of the outcomes of key organisational programmes such as Care Together (an initiative looking at how we can nurture domiciliary care within communities so people can continue to live at home), playing a key role in connecting partners and the community voluntary sector to this work as well as supporting the development of family hubs and libraries as safe supportive places to address poverty and inequality.
4. A structure that is financially stable and resilient within a challenging economic landscape, that is not reliant on temporary sources of funding.

The achievement of this work will be supported by our proposed structure which includes the following roles:

Head of Communities Service: We propose to introduce a Head of Communities post to oversee the leadership and management of the service for Cambridgeshire and to cease the current shared Head of Service Think Communities arrangements with Peterborough City Council. The post holder will directly line manage two Community Team Manager posts and will report to the Assistant Director, for Communities, Employment and Skills.

Community Team Manager: Reporting directly to the Head of Communities, we propose the introduction of two Community Team Manager roles. Each Community Team Manager will have line management responsibility for the operational service in either the north (Huntingdonshire and Fenland) or the south (East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City) of the county. Each Community Team Manager is expected to take a thematic lead for either children and young people (including strategic responsibility for the Youth Offer), or work relating to vulnerable adults across the whole county to ensure consistency in policy, practice and service development where it is required.

Community Coordinator: We propose two Community Coordinator roles in each of the five district areas, with one role taking a specialist lead for children and young people, the other role leading around vulnerable adults. We recognise the importance of access to funding for community groups and will retain the community reach fund in each district (a fund offering grants of up to £1000 to help lever other sources of funding), extending the fund to support activities focused on the 19 plus age group. This support for voluntary community sector organisations to access external funding forms a key part of the Community Coordinator role and will be a feature of the service moving forward.

The new service will develop existing work around appreciative enquiry, deliberative democracy and youth voice, which are all ways of hearing local voices and building on the positive aspects of people's lives as we work with them and you all to improve what we offer. This work will feed into the coproduction and design of council-wide services and partnership services.

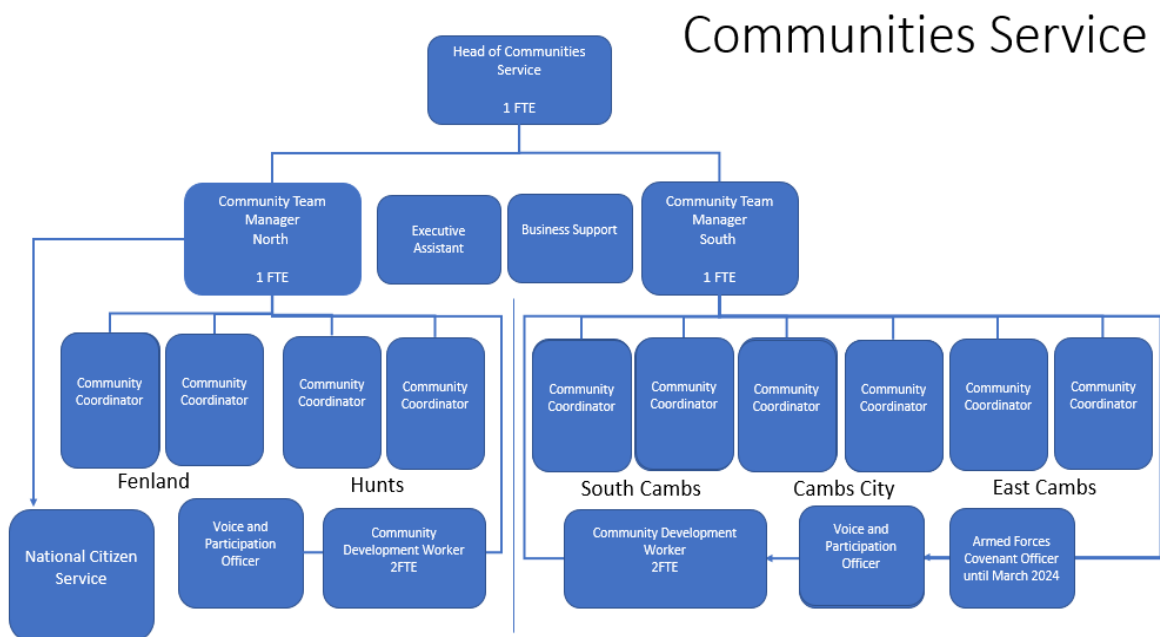
Recognising the challenges faced around refugee and asylum schemes the structure develops this capacity so we can play our part. We will help to support integration and cohesion through supporting the coordination of work with new arrivals, alongside our ability to reach out to communities which are underrepresented including addressing inequality of access and opportunity for county council services.

Community Development Worker: In the new structure, we propose four Community Development Worker roles, split equally between the north and the south of the county. Community Development Workers will support the Community Coordinators to carry out specific work which builds frameworks for resident engagement and develops community capacity alongside partners to ensure that our communities can work effectively with the council and its' partners to better develop preventative services.

Voice and Participation Officer: We propose two Voice and Participation Officer roles. These roles will work with partners to build frameworks of engagement for children and young people and other residents to participate in decision making through active citizenship giving the best opportunities to ensure that services council-wide are accessible, relevant and impactful for our children, young people, families and communities.

The National Citizen Service and the Armed Forces Covenant Officer: There are no changes proposed to these roles as part of this consultation.

Proposed structure chart



Service Delivery

Within the consultation, we are proposing a move away from the direct delivery of Time Credits and Community Resilience and Protection (against scams). However, we recognise the importance of transitioning from this activity carefully. For instance, by understanding how other parts of the council or the wider system can pick up aspects of this activity e.g. our libraries and communications colleagues promoting information and providing guidance to help people avoid being scammed; seeing how our partners within the community voluntary sector can take on the practical delivery of Time Credits and by identifying how we, and our partners, can provide support through other routes to those who are victims of scams. We would welcome your feedback on this aspect of our proposed changes.

We look to colleagues to help us as we re-focus the work of the Communities Service. We want to ensure we maximise what we can offer to partners through our county-wide reach and through our council services and responsibilities. We welcome your suggestions and feedback during the consultation period.

How to comment on the Communities Service consultation proposals:

The formal consultation period runs until 5pm on Friday 24th February. Comments on the proposals can be made via email to communitiesconsultation@cambridgeshire.gov.uk We will update you on the confirmed structure after this date.