

THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2022

PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY IN LOCALITIES: TOWNS

Purpose of report: To present to the Committee an approach for improving multi-agency delivery of services and outcomes for local residents and communities, through partners working better together at a recognisable and distinctive local level, primarily around loosely defined town footprints, and bringing together services, projects, people and resources to align and co-ordinate their plans and activity.

Introduction:

1. A need has been identified to ensure effective and efficient partnership arrangements focused on delivery, at a sub-county spatial level. This partly arises from increased demand on services, restricted budgets set against the growing demand and inter-dependencies between services, activities and projects that make a difference to residents' lives.
2. In addition, new health structures and policies are being developed and implemented that have a stronger relationship with partners at a local level. A higher priority is increasingly being afforded to the wider determinants of health, the services and resources that impact them, their practical delivery and the role of Local Government (see Fuller Stocktake report at [NHS England » Next steps for integrating primary care: Fuller stocktake report](#)).
3. These issues have particular relevance for communities that are identified as experiencing the greatest and/or multi-dimensional needs and/or vulnerabilities. In a post-pandemic, economically uncertain, busy national policy context, the collective focus of the County Council and its partners is on the delivery of improved services, better outcomes, and greater efficiencies, for Surrey residents, the economy, the environment, and place.

Purpose and scope

4. Recognising the need and imperative to put in place enhanced partnership delivery arrangements at a local level, it is intended that the following features, for example, would be evident in any new arrangements:

- Improved sharing of data, evidence and perspectives at the local level
 - Ensuring co-ordinated partner engagement with local people, in places they recognise and associate with, is used to drive delivery
 - Convening, co-ordinating and aligning partners' and communities' finance, people and assets
 - Co-designing and implementing new multi-agency service models
 - Shared oversight and assurance of delivery and remedial action
 - Delivering identified partnership projects
5. By working more effectively together in defined localities, the County Council and health, District and Borough, Police, community, voluntary and charitable partners will work with local people to identify the priorities for action and delivery, which subject to the needs of the local area may include, e.g. tackling health inequalities and instigating health improvement activity, rationalising assets and securing their optimal utilisation, protecting and improving the public realm and natural assets and undertake 'place-making' enhancements, regenerate built environment and communities, stimulate economic activity, especially High Street/Town Centres and supporting thriving communities and their empowerment.
6. It should be noted that while these are typical areas of focus, they will vary between different places. The activity required to bring forward some projects and initiatives can be complex and time consuming (especially when seeking the engagement of a wide group of stakeholders including residents) while others may be more readily delivered in shorter timeframes.

How might this best be achieved?

7. A body of work that reflects the above approach is already in place in the form of a number of 'pilots', upon which further work can be developed. These include, for example, existing relationships and partnership work lead by the County Council in Caterham, Farnham, Weybridge and Horley, by PCNs in North Guildford and East Surrey, the Health and Wellbeing Boards 'Key Neighbourhoods', Community Liaison Officer team and Joint Officer Groups established by the County Council's Place team (see Appendices A, B and C)
8. The experience gained and learning secured from these various and varied pilots indicates that, notwithstanding the potential challenges of working in this way (see paragraph 9, below) and the time needed to put in place strong foundations from which good progress can be made, such an approach offers great potential for creating a stronger collective local focus on better outcomes for residents, the economy and environment, especially where it is based on a genuine partnership of equals, where no one individual or agency dominates.
9. Key to the approach is the ability of all partners to contribute positively to building and sustaining trusting relationships through honest and open discussion. This can then provide the basis for better aligning and potentially sharing resources at a local level. (See Appendix D – spectrum of maturity in partnership work)

10. In identifying the positive approach and behaviours that are more likely to lead to the successful delivery of improved outcomes, it is important also to consider what behaviours and issues might frustrate this, in order that these can be addressed and dealt with collectively by partners. Based on experience to date and from elsewhere, these challenges can typically include:

- Getting partners to agree on priorities for action
- Ensuring residents voices are heard and drive delivery of resident priorities
- Keeping partners actively involved
- Preventing the partnership from becoming a talking shop
- Lack of understanding of role, culture and language
- Making decisions that all partners endorse
- Getting agreement on the sharing of resources to achieve agreed objectives
- Linking partnership work with partners' mainstream activities and budgets
- Monitoring the effectiveness of collective work and delivery
- Determining whether what is being achieved justifies the costs involved
- Avoiding collaboration overload
- A reluctance to share information

Towns as a critical 'building block'

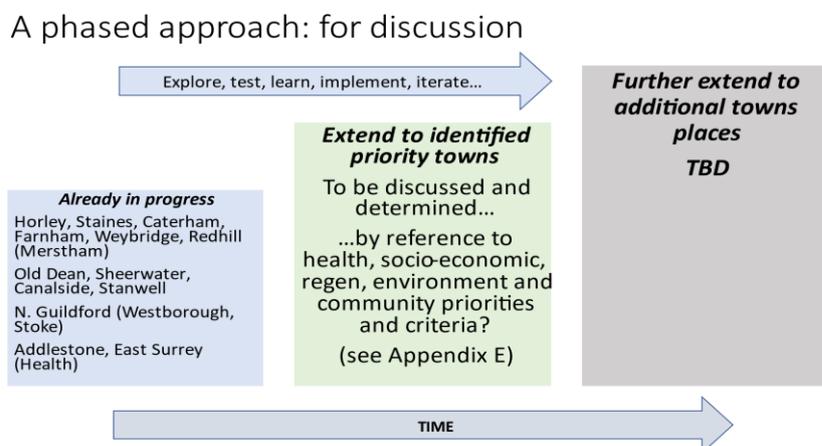
11. With a focus on delivery in partnership at a local level, particularly for those in greatest need or the most vulnerable, towns offer an optimum spatial level at which to work collaboratively, for a variety of reasons. Surrey's towns and urban areas contain the greatest concentration of highest need (See Appendix E for the 21 areas of greatest deprivation in Surrey as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, matched against towns). Recognising towns as a building block for delivery reflects the dispersed nature of Surrey's towns and the absence of a single dominant city (referred to as 'polycentricity').
12. In addition, towns provide a recognisable focus and strong sense of identifiable place and community for local people, which whilst there is likely to be some commonality of issues, will have distinctive characteristics, with specific local needs and priorities, that can best be addressed at a local level.
13. While the precise boundaries and footprints of towns are not prescribed precisely nor well-defined, it is apparent from work done to date analysing socio-economic data that some 27 centres of population and an additional two more rural areas comprising collections of villages and hamlets, can be established (See Appendix E). While by no means having absolute co-terminosity, this number broadly aligns with the 'natural communities' described some years ago and the number of Primary Care Networks (26) in Surrey.
14. The 29 areas, broadly set against the County Council electoral Divisions, can be seen in the map and spreadsheet at Appendix F. While not comprising a definitive, precise and neat boundary alignment, it does present a starting point

for discussions with Divisional Members around which town they see or prefer as the focus for their work and engagement with partner organisations.

15. Experience suggests that there are certain conditions under which pursuing a town-based collaborative approach is less likely to be appropriate and/or efficient and effective. These may include where: an issue, challenge or service is primarily the responsibility of one agency, with others only having a marginal interest or contribution; where agencies have no shared objectives; the issue, challenge or service is at a hyper local level, e.g. Ward or neighbourhood; the primary/singular objective is to simply achieve cost savings; the organisations involved have a poor history of working together; partners are looking to shift costs or apportion blame.

Next steps

16. This report seeks to introduce a broad approach to delivering in partnership more effectively and efficiently at a spatial level, e.g towns, that has a sound rationale and ‘makes sense’. It is suggested that the practical application of this approach will benefit from being emergent and not seen as a ‘single moment in time’ blueprint for the whole County, rather developing over time in accordance with a prioritised programme.
17. Building on the experience to date in key localities, in which a number of Members will already be involved, a fuller assessment of what co-ordinated partnership activity is already in place in localities will be undertaken. Additional towns that would benefit from this approach will be identified in the coming months, by applying robust, multi-dimensional criteria and further engaging with Members, to establish those to be prioritised for initiating enhanced partnership delivery work from April 2023/24. The expectation is that the programme will continue to develop and mature, with current towns and towns new to the programme contributing to testing, learning, iterating and implementation, with a view that further, additional towns would be identified and brought into the programme from 2024 onwards, thus:



18. A lead agency and senior individual working in each of the prioritised towns will be identified to lead the work of partners to develop a co-ordinated, multi-disciplinary delivery approach. As the work in the towns is planned and developed, it will be important to share progress and learning across the leads to develop a broadly consistent approach, within which local variation can be accommodated. As has been the case in the County Council's work at community and locality levels to date, Divisional Members and Ward, Town and Parish Councillors will be briefed on the work and invited to contribute to the formation of the priorities for delivery and work programme
19. In order to manage the overall programme of partnership delivery in towns, it will be necessary in the next phase of the work to determine the most appropriate reporting, monitoring, communication and assurance mechanisms and resources to generate both local briefings and timely reports into the County Council, Scrutiny, Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), Surrey Forum, and other key partner meetings, as necessary. (see Appendix G)

Conclusions:

20. A number of drivers, along with increasing practical experience of working in communities and the approach that was taken to working at a local level during the pandemic, all militate towards a greater and unifying focus on partnership delivery in towns, as part of a patchwork of operational arrangements and structures for delivery of services and improved outcomes for Surrey residents.
21. This paper sets out background research and analysis and a proposed emergent and organic approach and way forward for further comment and discussion, towards implementation in early 2023.

Recommendations:

22. That Members of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee support the broad approach of extending the work of delivering in partnership in towns, in order that the proposed next steps can be taken and work progressed
23. That Members highlight any particular benefits, issues or challenges they would wish to see taken into account in the next phase of developing the work.

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Sources/background papers

Metro-Dynamics analysis of Surrey towns

Appendices

Appendix A – Place Priority Areas

Appendix B – Health & Wellbeing Key Neighbourhoods

Appendix C – Guildford & Waverley Case Study

Appendix D – Spectrum of Maturity in Partnership Work

Appendix E – Greatest Areas of Deprivation in Surrey

Appendix F – Possible Town Footprints