



**Concurrent Meeting of the  
Prosperous Communities  
and Corporate Policy and  
Resources Committees**

**Thursday, 23 April 2020**

**Subject: Communities at Risk (Vulnerable Communities)**

Report by:

Enterprising Communities Manager

Contact Officer:

Grant White  
Enterprising Communities Manager

grant.white@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To update on vulnerable communities, approve new communities at risk policy document and establish communities at risk fund.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. Approve the Communities at Risk Policy Document
2. Approve the creation of the Communities at Risk Fund to be held as an Earmarked Reserve and replacing the Vulnerable Communities Reserve.
3. An annual report to be produced on all identified communities at risk to include summary, identified issues, impact assessments, progress reports and details of funding commitments

## IMPLICATIONS

### Legal:

Not applicable.

### Financial : FIN/7/21/SL

Reserves are currently earmarked as follows;

EMR RE89 - Supporting Vulnerable Communities £61,770

CAPITAL - Plus remaining approved capital budget for CCTV expansion £27,265 (slipped from 19/20 to 20/21)

REVENUE - Plus £12,600 underspend in 19/20 for Community Payback scheme to be carried forward into 20/21

CAPITAL - Hemswell Masterplan approved capital budget of £150,000 slipped into 20/21

REVENUE - £61,800 remaining balance of previously approved £100,000 from Investment for Growth reserve (RE83). This was approved for spend within 2 years by CP&R 28.07.16.

**TOTAL AVAILABLE BUDGET: £313,435** to be pooled into a Communities at Risk Reserve (to replace to Supporting Vulnerable Communities Reserve).

The Capital schemes above have previously been approved by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. Any future allocation of spend from remaining balances will require prior approval.

### Staffing :

Not applicable.

### Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Not applicable.

### Data Protection Implications :

Not applicable.

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :**

Not applicable.

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :**

Not applicable.

**Health Implications:**

The introduction of a Communities at Risk Policy Document and associated Communities at Risk Fund will enable the Council to deliver effective services and responses to identified issues including those that have a direct or in-direct impact on the health of individuals.

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Vulnerable Communities Audit 2019

**Risk Assessment :**

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

*i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)*

**Yes**

**No**

**X**

**Key Decision:**

*A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications*

**Yes**

**No**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Vulnerable communities within West Lindsey are characterised by compounding environmental and socio economic risk factors that have a negative effect on the lives of those living in such communities. Issues within these communities also adversely impact the Council's ability to realise the potential of its growth ambitions i.e. the opportunity cost of enforcing ASB and the private rented market and the continued stigmatisation of down town Gainsborough.
- 1.2 The Council has been actively engaged supporting vulnerable communities. Two such areas have been the South West Ward in Gainsborough and Hemswell Cliff. A wide range of work has been delivered in these areas to address issues.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the current position, progress in existing vulnerable communities and details on how we will move forward to further address on-going issues as well as be prepared for new challenges in the future.

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 The West Lindsey Corporate Plan recognises that some areas of the district are amongst the most deprived in the country with the impact of deprivation being multi-faceted affecting housing standards, community cohesion, anti-social behaviour and educational attainment all of which have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents. Addressing the causes and impact of deprivation has therefore been a major focus.
- 2.2 In 2017 West Lindsey adopted a Supporting Vulnerable Communities Place Based Strategy. It took for the first time a strategic approach to tackling social problems acknowledging that it is inevitable that in order to stabilise and best support them, our most vulnerable communities require increased proactive resource, capacity and efforts to coordinate intervention and improve outcomes. It recognised that work cross departmentally and with our partners was key to making significant change.
- 2.3 Two vulnerable communities were identified and had their own place based strategies developed:
  - Gainsborough South West Ward Place Based Strategy 2018
  - Hemswell Cliff Stabilisation and Normalisation Strategy and Delivery Plan 2017.
- 2.4 The West Lindsey Housing Strategy acknowledges that the work to support vulnerable communities is a key work programme for it to deliver. It is recognised that aligning housing, homelessness prevention, economic growth, community safety, safeguarding, health and

wellbeing, enterprising communities, employment and skills and environmental protection functions allows for development and delivery of a social regeneration approach.

- 2.5 Throughout the last year systematic review of the above strategies has been undertaken. An Audit of the Vulnerable Communities Strategy which enveloped the place based work in these 2 areas took place during 2019 with the report being produced in January 2020.
- 2.6 The review of the strategies has given officers the opportunity to reflect on progress, acknowledge what has been successful, what needs to continue and what is in effect business as usual.
- 2.7 In addition to greater strategic working under the Housing Strategy the Council continues to develop its approach to social regeneration. This is evidenced in our work to support the Local Access Programme for Gainsborough resulting in over £2m being awarded to support the growth and development of our social economy.
- 2.8 Social regeneration is about ensuring that the places where people live create new opportunities, promote wellbeing and reduce inequalities so that people have better lives, in stronger communities and achieve their potential.

### **3. COVID-19 Pandemic Impact**

- 3.1 The on-going and developing situation around the Coronavirus pandemic will inevitably have a long term impact on communities. For our vulnerable communities the impacts may be far more prevalent and result in greatly increased inequalities for residents.
- 3.2 At this time we have already seen the impact of increased unemployment, loss of training opportunities and food supply challenges. The Council must be in a position to respond to new challenges faced as a result of the pandemic including unknown outcomes.
- 3.3 New vulnerable communities may emerge following the pandemic. The introduction of the proposed Communities at Risk Policy Document and associated fund will ensure the Council has taken pro-active steps to prepare and respond to people in need.
- 3.4 It is also important to note that whilst the pandemic dominates current headlines and thinking, we continue to face a wide range of challenges in our vulnerable communities such as food/fuel poverty, poor mental and physical health and overall poor life chances. It is therefore important that work around supporting vulnerable communities should continue.

#### **4. Hemswell Cliff – A Model of Good Practice**

- 4.1 Hemswell Cliff prior to the adoption of a strategic approach had become a very unstable and vulnerable community. A rise in ASB, violent crime and intimidation affecting both environmental and community safety had escalated prior to 2018.

Adjacent to this, positive plans were developing Hemswell Cliff's designation as a Food Enterprise Zone to further support this area as a key employment site for the district.

- 4.2 A combined approach with the police, LCC and WLDC stemmed the escalation. A number of the proactive actions are noted below:

- West Lindsey CCTV and dedicated Police Officer together with LCC's Positive Futures support to deliver activities for the youths stemmed the ASB.
- West Lindsey took on a contract to manage the Estate where the concentration of the trouble was. A 5 year contract with Hemswell Resident Management Company which commenced 1 June 2018. This at cost non-commercial venture has enabled more reinvestment back into the village. It has significantly stemmed the visible decline and continues to make improvements.

- 4.3 Now the area is much more attended to, cared for and it pays off. The housing market had virtually ceased whilst the visible decline and negative reputation prevailed. Over the last 2 years the housing market has been unlocked and a change in buyer is aiding the turnaround of this area. Work on reputation will take longer however it is starting to turn in the right direction.

- In 2017 data in regard to the main housing estate showed the houses were 56% rented. In 2020 this is now at 50% rented.

- 4.4 Our work and the intervention has been successful but it has not finished. Any withdrawal of the core work in this area would result in a spring back quickly. Work is now focused on the continued normalisation of this village under the strategic guidance of the Housing Strategy.

#### **5. Systematic Review Undertaken**

- 5.1 During 2019 a systematic review was undertaken looking at projects, services and actions undertaken as part of work to support identified vulnerable communities. The review of the strategies, adopted as a tool to direct, oversee, coordinate and monitor the necessary work programmes required to drive forward improvement has given officers the opportunity to reflect on progress, acknowledge what has been embedded as business as usual and to identify areas where more work is needed.

- 5.2 This is supported by the finding of a concurrent Vulnerable Communities Audit which found that operationally some very good work is being delivered but needs to be strengthened by a more strategic approach to ensure risks are identified and mitigated.
- 5.3 A series of officer workshops were held with the aim of determining:
- What work is planned, currently underway or delivered that is aligned to these strategies
  - Who has implemented them or is planned to implement them
  - How have they implemented or how do they plan to be implemented
  - How we are managing the success or are planning the managing the success of this work – what are the benefits to our current and future residents
  - Whether this work is embedded as Business as Usual or whether it needs to continue as a project
- 5.4 The results of these workshops have helped shape the new Communities at Risk Policy and approach to developing Action Plans for identified or at risk communities.

## **6. Vulnerable Communities Audit**

- 6.1 The Vulnerable Communities Audit was initiated in April 2019. It highlighted that the Council can develop further actions to improve its work around vulnerable communities including:
- Increased co-ordination between the teams across strategies
  - Regular reporting and monitoring of performance
  - An annual report, including lessons learnt, that goes to committee
  - Streamlining the intervention approval process
  - Engagement with Police and LCC
- 6.2 The vulnerable communities strategies rely on the work of managers at both an operational and strategic level to be delivered effectively. The audit found that operationally there is some good work being delivered – managers are experienced and knowledgeable in their area of work and are monitoring performance while delivering an effective service.
- 6.3 At both strategic and operational levels there are areas which could be strengthened to ensure that risks are identified and mitigated, performance is monitored and reported, and potential vulnerable communities are identified in advance.
- 6.4 In addition to working with the two already identified communities the audit recommends the implementation of a methodology of identifying other communities that might need assistance. This should be implemented to support a more proactive rather than reactive response.

- 6.5 The audit found that improvements can be made in risk management by producing a risk register specifically for vulnerable communities as well as separate registers at an operational level. This would support the improvements to the day-to-day activities and future planning when moving forward with overall strategies.
- 6.6 There can also be some improvements made in terms of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). Attempts have been made with KPI's but these are usually just monitored by managers for service performance and they need to be taken further by managing the performance data and identifying implications.
- 6.7 There were several areas of good practice found during the audit:
- All of the teams focus on the two already identified vulnerable communities, even if they are not aware that their work is feeding into the strategy
  - All the teams report on performance to progress and delivery monthly, with quarterly report containing more narrative about where the service is with regards to budget and performance
  - Good working relationships between several of the teams involved in the strategy
- 6.8 Operationally and strategically the coordination of the delivery of the Place Based Strategies and the actions within has strengthened in recent months through the work of the Housing Board as the Board has matured.
- 6.9 Officers welcome the acknowledgement that good work has and is being delivered by the relevant teams. Officers also welcome the acknowledgement that much of this work was undertaken during a period with no staff resource in a coordinating/lead role for a number of months and as such progress to date should be applauded.
- 6.10 Moving forward the focus for the Housing Board in relation to vulnerable communities will be to further monitor performance, identify and mitigate risk and ensure procedures and practices are in place and maintained where actions have become embedded as business as usual. This will ensure the stability of the current identified communities and will provide the mechanism for identifying communities at risk of becoming vulnerable in the future all contributing to the objectives within the corporate plan.
- 6.11 The audit was presented and signed off by Management Team on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

## **APPENDIX 1 – Vulnerable Communities Audit January 2020**



## **7. Moving Forward**

7.1 Based on our learning over recent years and the findings of the Vulnerable Communities Audit, the following areas of work are now key to moving forward our work in responding to and supporting communities at risk:

- Communities at Risk Policy Document (Section 7)
- Contextual Safeguarding (Section 8)
- Hemswell Cliff Managed Estate (Section 9)
- Communities at Risk Budget (Section 10)

## **8. Communities at Risk Policy Document**

8.1 The introduction of a new Communities at Risk Policy Document provides a clear corporate approach to the identification, escalation and response to a community that is at risk of becoming or already is vulnerable.

8.2 The policy document is supported by a range of tools to aid officers in managing and responding to an identified risk. These tools will be developed and introduced upon approval of this report and include:

- Communities at Risk Register
- Trigger mechanism for communities at risk
- Action plan templates for managing responses
- Reporting mechanism to Management Team and Members

8.3 The policy document has been co-produced by Di Krochmal, Andy Gray, Rachel Parkin and Grant White with endorsement from the Housing Board. It is based on learning and best practice.

8.4 The new policy document will direct the creation of new standardised action plans for identified communities at risk. These will replace previous Place Based Strategies created. Moving forward this will mean all actions plans created to respond to communities at risk will be developed following a corporate policy and monitored centrally.

8.5 The policy document will introduce regular reporting on identified communities at risk. This includes providing relevant updates through Progress & Delivery, regular updates to Management Team and an annual report to Prosperous Communities Committee.

## **APPENDIX 2 – Communities at Risk Policy Document**

## 9. Contextual Safeguarding

- 9.1 “Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people’s experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

Children’s social care practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.”

(Firmin, 2019).

- 9.2 In 2017, Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (LSCP) with WLDC submitted a bid to adopt a Contextual Safeguarding approach following the council’s involvement and experiences at Hemswell Cliff. This was not successful with more urban areas being selected but in August 2019, a request for expressions of interests by LSCP to pilot this approach in partnership with LSCP was advertised with West Lindsey being successful.
- 9.3 The expression of interest was submitted for the South West Ward taking into account the partnerships present within the area, low cost housing, deprivation factors, ASB, numbers of missing children and attendance and attainment at school.
- 9.4 This was an opportunity to engage all agencies in one common aim to reduce some of the issues within our most deprived area and work with the people, not just the properties within the area. This is also intended to be an ongoing approach for all agencies and if successful, will be rolled out across all of West Lindsey and the county.
- 9.5 Contextual Safeguarding has shown to reap benefits in bigger city areas such as Hackney and as such all methodologies and resources are available to use meaning we do not have to start at the very beginning.
- 9.6 West Lindsey has been the lead agency in this due to the amount of knowledge we hold about the area. This fits within our Corporate Plan and will work alongside the new Communities at Risk Policy Document. This is a real opportunity to work with agencies that don’t typically want to work with the council and work with them towards a common aim.
- 9.7 The intention is that this approach will be adopted by all agencies and the partnerships that are already in existence will be strengthened. This

could mean a number of changes to certain practices; i.e. if we commission projects within the area can they sign up to the Safeguarding Lincolnshire training? When consulting on planning applications, do we take into account if there are any spaces which may be susceptible to untoward activities?

- 9.8 Contextual Safeguarding is about providing interventions to disrupt exploitative behaviour and enable young people to live without fear of harm. This isn't going to stop all criminalities but what it can do is enable the relevant agencies to identify risk of harm or risk of exploitation earlier to prevent the perpetuating cycles which do happen within families in our district.
- 9.9 Progress of the pilot will be reported by running it as a project through the Housing Board. It is also reported back to the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership, Strategic MACE (Multi Agency for Child Exploitation) Board.
- 9.10 As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and the introduction of social distancing guidance some progress on this area of work may be temporarily postponed.

## **10. Hemswell Cliff Managed Estate**

- 10.1 The Council is currently delivering the Hemswell Cliff Managed Estate contract. A report is being prepared alongside this report to review the continuation of this contract. This report will be presented to Prosperous Communities Committee and Corporate Policy & Resources Committee in June/July 2020.
- 10.2 Earmarked reserve funding previously allocated to support regeneration work in Hemswell Cliff is identified and allocated as part of the new Communities at Risk Budget detailed below.

## **11. Communities at Risk Fund**

- 11.1 Over recent years the Council has committed financial resources in support of the various strategies, action plans and work delivered to support vulnerable communities. This report proposes to pool any remaining funds earmarked for vulnerable communities into a new Communities at Risk Fund.
- 11.2 The Communities at Risk Fund will enable the Council to better manage and oversee financial resources required and spent supporting vulnerable communities. The budget will be overseen by the Housing Board with all decisions on spend requiring approval by Management Team. The day to day management of the budget will be conducted by the Enterprising Communities Service.

11.3 Any spend from the new fund will require an Action Plan (as directed in the Communities at Risk Policy Document) to be in place and approved by Management Team.

11.4 Examples of work that this fund could support include:

- Initial response to an emerging community risk
- Feasibility or research to gather data/evidence for a response
- Place based investment such as street scene modifications
- Funding to partners, providers or VCS to deliver specific outcomes
- Preventative or longer term solution measures
- Empowering community ownership such as asset transfer or enabling adoption standards to be reached for assets

This is not an exhaustive list and a degree of flexibility is required to respond to new issues.

11.5 The total fund of £123,570 will be created from the following earmarked reserves:

**Supporting Vulnerable Communities Fund**

£61,770 remaining in the reserve

**Hemswell Cliff Earmarked Reserve**

£61,800 remaining in the reserve (Investment for Growth)

11.6 Within the above reserves there are a number of on-going agreed commitments that will form part of the new fund for the purpose of budget and delivery management.

**Supporting Vulnerable Communities Fund**

£12,600 carry forward balance for Community Payback year-end 2019/20

£27,265 remaining capital budget for CCTV expansion 2020/21

**Hemswell Cliff Earmarked Reserve**

£150,000 capital budget approved to support the Hemswell Cliff Masterplan

11.7 In creating the new Communities at Risk Fund the following initial allocation is proposed but may be subject to change to meet new needs and demands:

	Title	Description	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	TOTAL
R e v e n u e	Communities at Risk Fund	Revenue fund able to support activity in response to an identified or emerging community at risk	Funds held in earmarked reserve and drawn down as approved by Management Team				£113,570
	Hemswell Cliff Regeneration (Normalisation)	On-going regeneration work now in the normalisation phase of delivery - linked to delivery of Hemswell Cliff Managed Estate contract	£5,000	£5,000			£10,000
	Community Payback	On-going support for the Community Payback scheme in West Lindsey	£6,300	£6,300			£12,600
	<b>TOTAL</b>		£11,300	£11,300	£0	£0	<b>£136,170</b>
C a p i t a l	CCTV Expansion	On-going expansion of CCTV in vulnerable locations at risk of crime	£27,265				£27,265
	Hemswell Cliff Investment for Growth	Capital reserve to support wider strategic work and investment in business and community growth	Report due to Committee later in 2020 to update on Hemswell Cliff Masterplan work and future actions				£100,000
	Hemswell Cliff Regeneration (Normalisation)	On-going regeneration work to achieve adoptable standards of local assets	£50,000				£50,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>		£77,265	£0	£0	£0	<b>£177,265</b>

11.8 The allocation table above includes on-going commitments that have previously been approved by Members including:

- Community Payback
- CCTV Expansion
- Hemswell Cliff Investment for Growth (Masterplan)

11.9 In addition to the creation of the new Communities at Risk Fund, the allocation table above also includes two allocations to enable the on-going delivery of regeneration and normalisation at Hemswell Cliff:

- Hemswell Cliff Regeneration (Normalisation) Revenue
  - To support delivery of the action plan
  - To support community based activity to continue building community resilience and cohesion
- Hemswell Cliff Regeneration (Normalisation) Capital
  - To support delivery of the action plan
  - To support works to achieve adoptable standards of local assets such as street lights, footpaths and roads

11.10 The annual report on Communities at Risk produced for Prosperous Communities Committee will include reporting on the fund.

11.11 The operation of the fund will be reviewed in 2023/2024.