

Community lead for Norfolk County Council

The Community and Environmental Services Department was established at the end of 2014 as part of a new senior management structure for the Council. The intention was that the Department provides leadership informed by an understanding of the social as well as physical needs and preferences of Norfolk's communities and the Council's service delivery.

The Department was created by putting existing services together and so we continue to be organised on historical service lines in place prior to the new Department coming into effect. This means that we have not yet created the necessary capacity or structure to help us deliver our community lead role.

The vision

Our Department is tasked with bringing the understanding and intervention in the physical and social aspects of communities together in one department – what in local government terms would be loosely called 'place'. Bringing these services together in one place provides the greatest opportunity for us to harness our expertise and capacity to support the county to grow and realise its ambitions.

We will develop a strong place-based (locality) focus to our work – and further information is given below about a locality based delivery model that will be our first step to achieving this. A strong place based vision will enable us to deliver growth, through designing interventions and projects specific to local needs and conditions. The work that our Economic Development and Strategy Group leads on will be at the heart of this, and provide an essential catalyst for further work.

Our work will, as far as possible, be community driven and delivered. Working with public service colleagues, we will aim to identify suitable 'hubs' that can be the focal point for communities. There needs to be a significant amount of work to develop this approach, which will need to be based on the needs of communities and resources available in the public service family, and not necessarily driven by the County Council or our current property portfolio.

Our communities and the voluntary sector will partner with us in our future way of working, making the best use of all the resources available in an area to deliver what communities need. We will need to find a way to better engage and harness this type of resource and change how we work to make it easier for people to work with us. We need to focus more on delivering what communities need and make it easier for these needs to be delivered in non-traditional ways.

The County Council carries out a significant amount of work with the voluntary sector across all services, but most of this is targeted at particular services or areas. In our lead community role, we will find ways to help the voluntary sector to support our communities. As well as putting a clear lead in place for all voluntary sector liaison

with the County Council, which should make working with us easier, we will put support for voluntary organisations in place for example support to write bids for funding that the County Council cannot access.

This is a journey and we are just at the start. This consultation documents sets out some of the proposed initial steps to deliver the vision, but there is still much more to do to move this forward. In terms of our structures, much of this will take place as part of Phase 2 over the next 6-12 months.

There will also be many other opportunities over the coming months and years to get involving in developing our approach even further, including putting in place joint teams with public sector colleagues and new ways of working with communities.

A proposed locality based service delivery model

The vision is not just about how we are organised. It is important to have a clear structure in place to help everyone to understand how to access our services and who is accountable for what.

It is proposed to introduce a new locality based service delivery model across the whole department that is based on:-

- A greater focus on locality based working;
- Maximising resource at locality level to deliver services, and minimising HQ/central costs;
- Increased/more effective working with the rest of NCC, district Councils and other public and community services, e.g. the health service, police and community/volunteer groups;
- Lower costs.

Making changes to our organisational structure are some of the first steps we propose to put this model in place, but the model is about much more than structures. We also need to:-

- Make changes to how we work with each other, both within the Council and with our public service and voluntary colleagues and partners;
- Understand local issues, within a wider view of the county and enable more local solutions;
- Change some job roles so that they are more multi-functional, rather than being focussed on a single task or specialist professional role;
- Put support and training in place to help us to make these changes;
- A standardised approach to working. Revised processes, systems and procedures.

What is a locality?

The proposed model uses the seven district council areas as localities.

Services do not necessarily need to be located in seven district council areas or have seven teams, but the work that we do needs to be aligned so that it is clear what is happening in each locality. We want a core of staff with a meaningful understanding of the issues that our local communities face.

For CES, the district council areas as proposed because:-

- District Council boundaries are already well defined and understood;
- A number of services are already aligned to these areas;
- A key focus of the new model will be working with district councils;
- This is a manageable number of localities.

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has already each been allocated a district council area to take a lead role on, further strengthening our relationships and leadership in these areas. These are:-

Broadland	Anne Gibson, Executive Director Resources
Breckland	Tom McCabe, Executive Director CES
Great Yarmouth	Simon George, Executive Director Finance
King's Lynn	Michael Rosen, Executive Director Children's Services
North Norfolk	Harold Bodmer, Executive Director Adult Social Services
Norwich	Wendy Thomson, Managing Director
South Norfolk	Louise Smith, Director of Public Health

What will be different?

We deliver a wide range of different services across CES and implementing a new model needs to reflect this, so it is unlikely that there will be a 'one size fits all' approach across all teams. We need to build on the good practice that we already have in place.

The things we want to achieve through the new model are:-

- Identify and utilise 'hubs' (probably existing buildings or meeting points) in key locations that can be a focal point for communities;
- Understanding the communities in each locality, and what their needs are;
- More staff based in localities and a smaller HQ function;
- Increased collaboration and joint working with our public and voluntary service partners, moving towards more joint arrangements e.g. shared buildings and joint teams and appointments;
- A clear understanding of the total resource available in localities, and ways to harness that resource to deliver what the community needs;
- Clear lines of accountability for our partners, so it is easier to work with us and to know who to talk to;
- A 'district co-ordinator' for each locality who would co-ordinate activity across a number of themes who would also seek opportunities to collaborate with local stakeholders and council colleagues (see further information about district co-ordinators below);

- Staff will work on a 'know your patch' basis in each locality – all staff will have an understanding of the locality they work in, who else works in the area, the key things they are working on in the locality and what the key community needs are;
- Continuing our drive for lean and efficient systems and devolved decision making;
- More decisions made in localities, with local solutions, and not referred back to County Hall.

At this stage, we don't have all the answers on what specific arrangements will need to be put in place to deliver the new model. This consultation is phase 1 and we will need to take time over the next 6-12 months to further develop our thinking for phase 2.

The level of available budget we will be working within to implement the new structure will be agreed by Members as part of the budget setting process. The current budget proposals include those which would require staff reductions to deliver. If Members decide to progress all of the current budget proposals, the financial envelope we would then be working within would mean the new model would need to:

- Reduce the overall number of staff – with reductions of up to 40% over three years in some services;
- Reductions in some service standards and activities to reflect the reduced staff capacity;
- Reduced capacity/funding/ability to deliver projects and schemes;
- A more generic approach to work rather than staff working in narrowly defined specialisms;
- Significant changes to systems and processes, including introducing more automated processes.

District Co-ordinators

The 'district co-ordinator' approach is something that we want to put in place across the Department as soon as possible.

It is proposed to allocate a 'district co-ordinator' for each locality (district council area) who would co-ordinate activity across a number of themes and who would also seek opportunities to collaborate across NCC and with local stakeholders.

This will focus on CES services initially, with scope to extend to other services later. The role is about:-

- Being a point of contact for the locality – both for other staff working in the locality and colleagues who want to know more about the locality;
- Being aware of the public service activity in the locality, and what the key areas of work are;
- Understanding who the key stakeholders and public service partners in a locality are, and building relationships with them, resulting in an active network;

- Knowing the 'patch', what makes the locality different to others and what the specific needs of the community are;
- Bringing together key staff working in a locality together with a view to identifying opportunities to work collectively with the resource available to meet community needs.

The Assistant Director Environment and Planning will take the lead on developing the Department's community lead role and an enabling communities approach for the County Council on a transitional basis. He will provide support and guidance to district co-ordinators on developing and carrying out their role.

The 'district co-ordinator' is not a new post. It is a role that will be allocated to existing post-holders working in localities, to be carried out alongside their existing role. It is proposed that:-

- Seven individuals are identified as 'district co-ordinators', one covering each district council area;
- These will be identified from post-holders working in localities (not at HQ) and holding a post below senior management level i.e. not in a post shown on the senior manager structure;
- Individuals will not be asked to carry out activities that go beyond their pay grade;
- This is not a permanent arrangement and there will be scope for the role to be covered on a rota basis within a locality if more than one individual is suitable.

As well as helping to deliver the CES community lead role, the 'district co-ordinator' approach is also an opportunity for individuals to develop their own skills and experience, and support will be provided to individuals to do this.