

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Executive

21 February 2023

## Community Networks

### Report of the Localities Work-stream Sponsor: Paul Shevlin (Craven District Council)

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#### 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the work undertaken in relation to the ambition for the new authority to develop and support Community Networks; to describe how they will fit with the broader strategy and operating model, to highlight any emerging issues and risks, and to outline options and recommendations for further development of this work.

#### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 North Yorkshire County Council's submission to government for the establishment of a unitary council put forward a case for a locality-based delivery model with four strong and interconnected pillars:
- i. Local services and access – locally based and integrated council, partner and community services.
  - ii. Local accountability – six Area Committees, political accountability for the discharge of statutory functions and services at local level.
  - iii. Local action – local people, partners and communities coming together in new Community Networks to identify and deliver against priorities.
  - iv. Local empowerment – devolution of powers to community groups and town and parish councils who want to, to run assets and services.
- 2.2 The proposal went on to describe the third pillar – Local Action – as being delivered through Community Networks.

*“Community Networks will act as local agents for economic and social change. They will be places of collaboration between business, public sector agencies and the communities they serve. Our approach will be centred around the significant economic, cultural, and social assets of market towns, surrounding villages and natural communities in North Yorkshire... This will lead to greater collaboration and will provide the support that helps communities to become more self-reliant and resilient. They will be the engine rooms of local action and ideas and will get things done in local areas. Areas will be subject to consultation with local communities and it is expected that the nature and make-up of them will evolve and flex over time, to meet local needs and priorities.”<sup>1</sup>*

- 2.3 The unitary proposal made a strong case for having Networks that would bring stakeholders together in localities to form local partnerships to develop local action plans based on shared local priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> [The new council | North Yorkshire County Council](#)

- 2.4 There are many examples across the county of successful partnership working. Communities and agencies working together to deliver change or address challenges.
- The multi-agency approach to supporting people through the pandemic – Team North Yorkshire – saw public agencies working alongside community support organisations, faith groups, small grass roots organisations and volunteers, local businesses and town and parish councils to make sure that anyone who asked for help got the support they needed.
  - Communities who experience flooding or severe weather events coming together to develop local resilience plans
  - Local charities working with partners in health and social care to relieve some of the pressures on the system during periods of high demand by utilising their volunteers and local support networks
  - Communities working together across the wider system to address issues like loneliness and social isolation, digital inclusion, anti-social behaviour, or access to services.

### **3.0 Policy Context**

- 3.1 The draft Council Plan for North Yorkshire Council, agreed by the Executive on 24 January 2023 and being considered by Council on 22 February 2023, includes the following priority which provides the policy mandate for the proposal to establish community networks: “Communities are supported and work together to improve their local area.’ We want North Yorkshire to have strong, resourceful, resilient and empowered communities who work together to make decisions on local priorities, enjoy improved local accountability and have the opportunity to run local assets where they want to take on additional responsibilities and where it would be value for money for all involved.”

- 3.2 It sets out the priorities for the next four years as:
- To set up and support six area committees to discuss local issues, provide direction and local leadership.
  - To work closely with, support and empower town and parish councils and community groups to run assets and services where they want to take on additional responsibilities, have the capacity to do so, and where it would be value for money for all involved.
  - To establish around 30 community networks, bringing together local Councillors, public sector agencies, communities and businesses to get things done in their local area.
  - To establish and maintain strong partnerships across North Yorkshire.
  - To support a vibrant and thriving voluntary and community sector in North Yorkshire”.

### **4.0 Introduction**

- 4.1 The vision described above has been central to the thinking and the development of the arrangements being made for the establishment of the Networks to date. The work is being led by the Localities Workstream.

- 4.2 Several pieces of work have been undertaken including:
- A review of networks and partnerships operating in other Councils;
  - a series of workshops, facilitated by PA Consulting, to establish some key principles and characteristics for the operation of Community Networks;
  - a task and finish officer group was formed, made up of representatives from all eight Councils and reporting to the Localities Board; who together have agreed the draft vision, high level terms of reference; and characteristics;
  - mapping of existing networks and partnerships who carry out similar roles to the vision for Community Networks;

- initial conversations with some of the existing networks and partnerships to understand and learn from them both what works well and what some of the challenges are;
- initial testing of proposed geographical areas as part of the Let’s Talk Local engagement campaign – on-going;
- engagement with senior managers from all 8 Councils;
- engagement seminar with Members;
- Reports considered by Locality and Committee Governance Member Working Group and LGR Transition Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

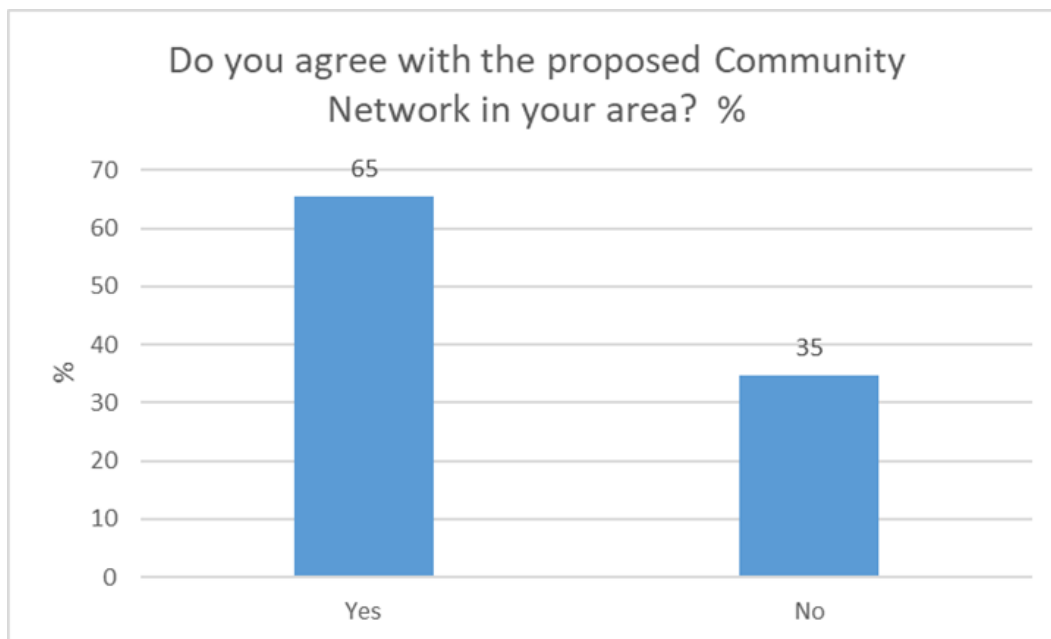
## 5.0 Consultation and Engagement

5.1 A range of engagement and consultation activities have been undertaken between September and December 2022 as outline in paragraph 4.2. The feedback from these activities is summarised below:

### 5.2 Let’s Talk Local

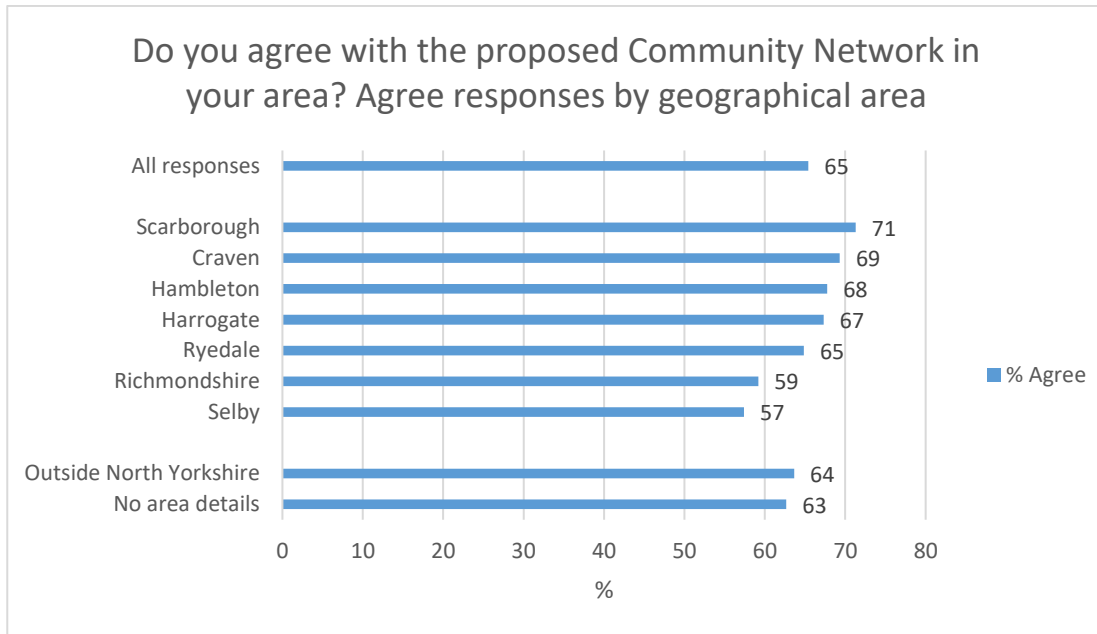
The following question was asked as part of the Let’s Talk Local engagement process: ‘Do you agree with the proposed Community Network in your area?’. This included a map showing 31 locality areas that were based on multiple Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) boundaries<sup>2</sup>. It was stressed that the map was provided as one spatial illustration only and that the network geographies would be for local consideration.

5.3 The responses to the question were that 65% of responses (2,565) agreed that the area on the map felt right for their community.



5.4 There were some differences across that county. In every district more people agreed with the proposed areas than didn’t, with support particularly strong in Scarborough, Craven, Hambleton and Harrogate.

<sup>2</sup> **Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs):** LSOAs have an average population of 1500 people or 650 households. Source: OCSI



5.5 Of those who agreed the reasons cited included that the size and geography looked logical; they could address local issues; build on local assets and support rural needs and concerns.

5.6 Interestingly the converse was true for those who disagreed, with the reasons cited that they felt the areas are too big and won't reflect rural issues. There was also disagreement with having rigid boundaries as they don't reflect the interaction between different areas.

5.7 Member Engagement

Members have been consulted on the proposal through reports being considered by the Locality and Committee Governance Member Working Group (26 September 2022); LGR Transition Overview & Scrutiny Committee (9 November 2022) and at a Member seminar (7 December 2022) open to all Councillors.

5.8 The minutes from Overview & Scrutiny Committee include the following comments:

Concerns raised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential lack of democratic representation and accountability as part of the Network members.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing the Community Networks model would undermine the elected parish and town councillors and lead to a duplication of work and the potential for conflict between the various partners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Networks boundaries are too big and they will become unfocused and not take meaningful action and outcomes if they are not properly set up and supported.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is already a chance for residents to get involved via question time at Parish Council meetings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lack of devolved funding was raised and the impact this would have on the networks having autonomy and being able to quickly drive improvements. Match funding of the councillors' locality budgets was put forward as a suggestion.</li> </ul>
In support of
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is pleasing to see that the Community Anchor Organisations will be utilised as 'system partners' to co-ordinate local action and use the knowledge and experience built up during the pandemic response.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Networks could have a key role to identify and fill any gaps in supporting communities where local action is missing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is pleasing to see the recognition that one size doesn't fit all and that networks in one part of the county will evolve at different speeds to those in other areas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous members endorsed the approach of a small number of pilots to further develop the concept.</li> </ul>

5.10 It was resolved that the report and comments received be noted on the progress made in relation to the development of a framework for the development of Community Networks.

5.11 The feedback from the Members' Seminar is summarised below:

<p><b>1. Networks/partnerships work best where there is/are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared purpose or common themes with a strong focus on action</li> <li>Clear and transparent governance, terms of reference and structure</li> <li>Non-political and multi-agency involvement</li> <li>Strong leadership in place</li> <li>Resources in place to support local action</li> <li>Flexible geographical boundaries that recognise that towns need the rural hinterlands (labour force, customers) and vice versa (service centre, jobs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Key Challenges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring rural areas are engaged and included to avoid dominance of towns/urban issues. Need a mechanism to ensure rural concerns are properly represented.</li> <li>Although divisional boundaries make sense for Council, they are not fixed (subject to boundary reviews), based solely on electorate proportionality and do not always reflect natural communities.</li> <li>Potentially resource intensive for Members and Parish and Town Councillors</li> <li>Size – could become too large and unwieldy</li> <li>Scale and scope – need to be focussed on taking collective action of issues of shared interest/concern</li> <li>Need to provide mechanisms for other stakeholders to participate such as Police/Health – may be a need for fewer - but larger - umbrella partnerships/networks</li> <li>Clarity needed on how Networks fit in to the existing democratic hierarchies and structures to avoid unnecessary duplication</li> <li>concerns amongst a few members that networks may be a form of (non-party) political opposition.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Development priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new Unitary needs time to bed in and ensure that it is 'getting the basics' of service delivery right before universal roll-out of transformation programmes such as Community Networks</li> <li>Arrangements for town councils in Harrogate and Scarborough towns needs to be resolved before development of Networks in those areas</li> <li>Start small with some pilots (willing and sceptical); learn from existing networks</li> <li>Test out ideas through participatory engagement with partners and public</li> <li>Secure 'buy-in' from other key partners: health, police, businesses, VCSE</li> <li>Further training and development for Members – and service teams - to help build confidence and define their respective roles and expectations</li> </ul>

- Further engagement with Town and Parish Councils – potentially through parish liaison arrangements
- Identify and secure resources - staff and financial
- Develop options for governance models for emerging networks to consider

5.12 Parish and Town Councils

Partners, including Parish and Town Councils, have been consulted via online webinars. They share the concerns that the establishment of Community Networks are a duplication of their democratic role and a concern from smaller, rural parishes that they will be town centric.

5.13 Learning from existing partnerships and networks

Discussions have taken place with existing partnerships/networks who share some of the characteristics of the Council's ambitions for Community Networks and who have been operating in the county for many years. Those discussions have highlighted the following:

- There are a range of governance models operating from informal partnership arrangements and steering groups; formal partnerships who have formed around a Community Interest Company model with the Directors drawn from a range of organisations and partnerships who have formed as a single entity.
- Partnerships have formed around principal towns as the main service towns for the wider rural hinterland.
- There was a mixed response in relation to their success in attracting rural members although agreement that this was desirable. It was also recognised that in all likelihood there may be times when networks do things that only apply to part of their area or join with a neighbouring network on issues of shared interest.
- It was acknowledged however that Communities close to those borders may identify with principal towns outside of North Yorkshire with no strong relationships to their closest North Yorkshire town.
- There was a consensus that support with the operation (or secretariat) of the partnership was important to maintain momentum.

5.14 The discussions have been constructive to date and continued dialogue will be helpful going forward to help with help further define the model.

5.15 Whilst there are some concerns and challenges to address further there is also support from communities, partners and parishes to continue to work with us to resolve issues and provide further re-assurance through prototyping the concept.

**6.0 Terms of Reference**

6.1 The work undertaken to date has been used to develop the components of a Terms of Reference, elements of which have been previously shared with staff, Senior Managers, Members of Council and partners (through the series of public webinars).

6.2 They set out the purpose, characteristics and principles of what Networks will be - and similarly what they won't be.

6.3 Vision Statement:

Community Networks will mobilise the energy, resources and partner relationships that exist in our communities to deliver the most appropriate local solutions for their people and place.

6.4 Purpose:

The role of Community Networks is to:

- Mobilise communities, unleash energy and ambition & give them a stronger voice

- Be action oriented, creating the conditions for local action to take place that otherwise wouldn't happen
- Develop local priorities and action plans utilising the skills, knowledge and assets of a range of partners
- Provide a mechanism for external investment (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Funding).

#### 6.5 Scope:

In carrying out that role, Community Networks will:

- Have a strong focus on prevention and reducing inequalities
- Be encouraged to look long term to tackle local challenges that:
  - improve the local economy and contribute to the creation of community wealth
  - drive community action
  - improve community, environmental and individual wellbeing
  - improve community resilience.

#### 6.6 Characteristics and Operating Principles

It is likely that the networks will look different in different places as they will reflect their local community however it is proposed that they will share some common principles in relation to their membership and mode of operation.

#### 6.7 Community Networks will:

- Be centred around principal towns and surrounding areas, reflecting natural communities
- Be subject to consultation with local communities and will build on existing assets; it is expected that the nature and make-up of them will evolve and flex over time to meet local needs and priorities
- Be multi-agency and operate as an informal partnership of local stakeholders that connect people and organisations in a community by bringing together, on an equitable basis, agencies from the public (including North Yorkshire Council, Town & Parish Councils and Parish Meetings, health, police etc.), business, faith, voluntary and community sectors that reflect that place
- Work together to address those local challenges and issues of shared interest that would benefit from them working collectively as a partnership by providing a vehicle for more joined-up approaches
- Identify priorities and develop a Local Action Plan
- Operate independently, having autonomy to elect their own Chair
- Be inclusive, trusted and recognised by local residents and will encourage local collaboration, local action and participation.

#### 6.8 Community Networks will not:

- Be single agencies nor will they have a single focus.
- Be talking shops. Their focus will be on delivering positive change through enabling the delivery of local projects.
- All happen at the same time. Developing partnerships and working collaboratively takes time and it is therefore likely that some will take longer to develop than others
- Have devolved budgets. They will however be encouraged and supported to explore funding opportunities from a range of sources such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding, Community Infrastructure Levies, national and local trusts and foundations and investment from corporate social responsibility opportunities.
- Be part of the governance structure of North Yorkshire Council.
- Have any devolved powers to set public policy or fetter the discretion of any of the individual partner organisations.

## 7.0 Legal Issues

- 7.1 Community Networks will see a range of local stakeholders working in partnership on matters of shared interest. They will be working in partnership. Partnerships can be as diverse and varied as the communities in which they're located and the issues they're formed to tackle. They will form when there is a need for collaborative relationship between a range of stakeholders who share common interests.
- 7.2 Collaborative or partnership working can be challenging, however there is value in different partners coming together, formally or informally, to both gain new insights into often long-standing issues and to better align and plan the resources that are invested by each.
- 7.3 There are a range of governance models that can be used as the vehicle for collaborative or partnership working. Some are contractual, some form as legal entities with all partners carrying legal obligations and risks others are informal networks or collaborations.
- 7.4 Different models that are used by partnerships. The following models are based on Surrey County Council's 'Guidance for Establishing Good Governance of Partnerships' framework.<sup>3</sup>
- a. A separate legal entity such as a company or charitable trust. This should only be used if there is a clearly defined purpose such as directly employing staff or holding assets. If a stand-alone vehicle is formed, it would not be considered a 'partnership' in law and as such can limit the liability of the members. However, it could create unnecessary bureaucracy and there are risks that it could become exclusive and disenfranchise some partners who may not wish to make such a formal commitment.
  - b. A Virtual Organisation created with a distinct identity but without being a separate legal entity. This is less bureaucratic and costly, and it appears independent to the public but is hosted by one partner. This could however be considered a partnership in law, which could expose other partners to joint liabilities and could obscure lines of responsibility and accountability.
  - c. Informal partnership managed by a Steering Group. This is the simplest model for partnership working. It consists of a steering group without dedicated resources. Its services or activities can be delivered through the various partners' mainstream activities or acting as an accountable body for projects. This model required partner organisations to nominate representatives with some delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the organisation to whom they are accountable.
- 7.5 It is proposed that Community Networks operate as informal partnerships or local steering groups in the first instance. Joint working arrangements between officers and Members of the new Council with colleagues from public, business, faith, voluntary and community sectors where each organisation commits to work together towards a set of shared goals.
- 7.6 Each partner organisation will nominate a person or persons as their representative(s) on the Community Network and they will determine the level of delegated decision making their representative has in that capacity.
- 7.7 Each Network should agree local Terms of Reference in line with section 6 of the report that clearly set out its purpose; what is expected of each member/stakeholder; roles and responsibilities; processes for decision making (including levels of delegation); how risks will be managed; resources available to them; and their rules of operation.

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<sup>3</sup> Guidance for Establishing Good Governance of Partnerships'. Surrey County Council (2010)



7.8 The Local Action Plans will detail the short, medium and long-term priorities identified by the Network in consultation with their wider community. To ensure accountability it is suggested that the Local Action Plans should be endorsed by the partner organisations.

## **8.0 Relationships with North Yorkshire Council**

8.1 Although independent of the Council, the Networks will be both supported by and connected into the Council through a number of relationships.

### **8.2 Community teams**

All network members, including Councillors, partner agencies, community members and service teams will be able to draw support from a team of community officers, employed by the Council within the Locality Engagement team, to help with local coordination, specialist advice and network development including:

- Supporting the development of the network helping to embed the key principles and to help to build cross-sector relationships
- Assisting with the development of skills, confidence and capacity.
- Assisting the networks to make the links between the strategic agenda of the Council and local priorities
- Supporting the networks to identify and develop their local vision and develop and deliver their own long term action plans
- Identify issues in their community, particularly those that result in inequalities
- Involve the wider community through participatory and engagement activities
- Understand what local communities and services are already doing and identify new opportunities
- Identify what works well and what could be improved.

8.3 This could include support with training, accessing data and local intelligence, running participatory workshops and accessing external funding. It is recognised that this will also be a new way of working for Councillors, Senior Managers and Council service teams and this should be built into any corporate organisational development and culture change programmes being developed as part of the transition to the unitary council.

8.4 An early priority will be to compile a Handbook for the Networks to help guide them through the various processes and considerations. This could include templates and advice sheets. This approach worked well when delivering the Community Libraries programme.

### **8.5 Senior Managers**

The new Council will nominate a Senior Manager (Assistant Director and above) to act as the named lead officer for each Network. They will act as the key link between the Council and the Network at a senior level. The role of the Senior Officer could include:

- Supporting the local Members and the Network Chairperson
- Co-ordinating input to the Network from the Council and other public sector agencies
- Gathering or requesting information on behalf of the Network
- Taking forward relevant actions from the meetings for consideration with the Council

### **8.6 Councillors**

Councillors will be members of the Networks that operate in their division and will be key enablers in bringing the work of the Networks to the attention of the Council.

### **8.7 Area Committees**

It is not envisaged that the role of the Area Committees would be to hold Networks to account; instead, the Area Committees would play an important role in empowering and supporting the Networks to deliver their own action plans and would provide a forum for local issues of importance to be raised.

## 8.8 Community Anchor Organisations (CAO)

There is an opportunity to align the development of Networks to some on-going work being undertaken by the Council's Stronger Communities team in relation to building community capacity through the development of a Community Anchor model. This work is building on the success of the model put in place during the pandemic of a network of place-based Community Support Organisations (CSO). Stronger Communities has been working with the CSOs – and other local community organisations during 2021/2022 to evaluate the CSO model and to identify future opportunities where a place-based network of local VCSE anchors could add value and work alongside the new Council. This was welcomed by members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8.9 The following benefits have been identified for the alignment of this work with the arrangements being developed for both Community Networks and the broader Locality model:

- Community Networks: CAOs who are recognised as a 'system partner' would be well positioned to co-ordinate the local VCS/grassroots involvement in their local Community Network and broader ambitions around the new Council's place based operating model
- Community engagement: as local trusted organisations CAOs can support both the new Council and Networks with wider community engagement/ involvement activities
- Local profiles/needs assessments: CAOs can contribute local knowledge around local needs. CAOs will also anticipate needs and create local solutions
- Governance: as constituted organisations able to hold assets, funding and employ staff they could, where invited to, support Networks with services such as secretariat roles, bidding for and holding investment
- Devolution: CAOs can help build capacity/confidence in wider local community sector, broker collaborations, pilot new services/ideas
- Growth: CAOs can help to enable transformative change such as community wealth creation.

## 9.0 Options

9.1 The work of the Localities workstream has been identified as one of the core elements of the transformation programme and as such will start as early as practicable. The following options have been considered for the implementation of this work after vesting day on 1 April 2023.

### 9.2 Option One – Full Implementation

To start the process of implementing Community Networks in all areas from 1 April 2023.

- i. This would provide a sense of equity across all communities however it is acknowledged that it is unlikely that the roll out will take longer in some areas than in others.
- ii. This would be a significant undertaking for the Council and would have implications on communities' staff, service teams, Senior Managers and Members at a time of major change.
- iii. This is new work that has previously not been resourced. Teams will need a period of adjustment as roles and structures are reviewed and will have limited capacity to take on new duties until the changes have bedded in without risking an impact on their existing core business.
- iv. Teams and Members will need further briefing and training to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to the new Locality model.
- v. Further dialogue is needed with key stakeholders to build reassurance and confidence.

9.3 This is therefore considered a high-risk option and is not recommended.

9.4 Option Two – Phased Implementation

To implement the Community Networks in phases in order to continue the proof-of-concept work already started through continued dialogue with partners and existing partnerships.

- i. This would be more manageable in terms of staff capacity both within the Local Engagement Service units and other service teams. It would enable the new structures the chance to start to bed in.
- ii. This option would enable the conversations with partners and staff teams and those partnerships who have indicated a willingness to work with the Council to continue in order to develop the concept further and address the concerns that have been highlighted in section five of the report.
- iii. This option also allows time to design a staff development resource to help service teams, Senior Managers and Members to feel confident in their roles.
- iv. Learning from existing partnership and networks across the county about what works well and what doesn't work will help to inform the Handbook or toolkit.

9.5 This carries lower risks than option one and is the preferred option.

**10.0 Proposed Implementation Plan**

10.1 This ambition forms part of the post-vesting day 'transformation' programme. The work being undertaken by the joint community teams from county and districts pre-vesting day is to inform the model through consultation and engagement with partners and communities. The implementation of the programme will not begin until after vesting day, as it will require the appropriate staff structures and other resources and relationships to be in place.

10.2 It is proposed that if Members favoured a phased implementation this would be operated as a rolling programme. Initially a limited number (circa 6) of Networks, in those areas where dialogue is on-going with existing partnerships, would be included for the further proof of concept phase. In addition, it is proposed that conversations are opened in a limited number of areas that don't currently have any similar partnerships operating.

10.3 As capacity is released within the new staff structures, more areas will be invited to start discussions. Data profiles could inform the priority order in which new localities are selected with the aim of having completed at least initial conversations in all areas across the county by the end of Year 1.

10.4 Timeline

Activities	Year One 2023/24				2024/25
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Continued discussions with existing partnerships	→				
Produce handbook for operation of Networks	→		★		
First wave of Networks in place			★		
Open discussions with new areas		→			
First wave of plans agreed			→	★	
Initial conversations in all areas				★	
Second wave of Networks in place			→		★
All network plans agreed				→	★

## **11.0 Risks**

11.1 The following principal risks are highlighted:

- The timetable for establishment of networks is brought forward to pre-vesting day which would have a significant impact on county and district community teams' capacity to deliver whilst also continuing to manage their business-as-usual workloads
- The timetable for development of networks is significantly pushed back beyond vesting day leading to reputational damage for new the council
- Agreement on spatial options not easily reached leading to delays in establishing networks and possible increase in resource requirements
- The networks fail to engage and attract the membership from a broad range of local partners or have a narrow agenda
- The new council seeks to control the networks compromising their independence.

## **12.0 Financial implications**

12.1 As outlined in paragraph 6.8 it is not proposed that the Community Networks will have devolved budgets, however there will be a requirement for some small pump-priming investment in both the development of the Networks and the early administration of them.

12.2 It is anticipated that this can be found from existing financial resources, including external funds such as UK Shared Prosperity and the Rural Fund and it is therefore not proposed to include these costs as a new recurring pressure in the base revenue budget.

12.3 As Networks establish and produce their Local Action Plans projects may be eligible for community grants. The Action Plans can also act as a local investment prospectus for other potential external investment such as Community Infrastructure Levy funds and other social investment streams such as corporate social responsibility.

## **13.0 Equalities implications**

13.1 An equalities impact screening form has been completed and is included in the report as Appendix 1.

13.2 There are no significant issues raised.

## **14.0 Climate Change implications**

14.1 A climate change impact assessment screening form has been completed and is included in the report as Appendix 2.

14.2 There are no significant issues raised.

## **15.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

15.1 The proposal for Community Networks is to form local multi-agency partnerships; a coming together of willing partners with resources, connections and insights to share these for the common good. This was included in the proposals to government for a single unitary Council for North Yorkshire and has been agreed as a priority in the draft Council Plan for the new Council.

15.2 Networks will not have any powers to make policy or fetter the discretion of any of the individual partner organisations. It is also likely that there will be priorities that are not shared by everyone. The focus of the Networks will be to bring the collective resources of partners together to deliver on matters of common interest when, by working as a partnership, they can achieve more than if acting alone.

- 15.3 Network partners will have access to resources that councils do not currently have either access to or any control over. Networks can create the opportunity and mechanism for everyone working together on shared priorities for the benefit of local residents.
- 15.4 The Council is in process of transitioning to a single unitary authority and staff and service teams are both experiencing a period of change and uncertainty. In addition, the staff teams who will be undertaking the initial transformation work on the implementation of Community Networks are also delivering their business-as-usual work and are involved in supporting a number of Local Government Reorganisation workstreams.

## **16.0 Recommendations**

- 16.1 It is recommended that the Executive
- i. Accept the report.
  - ii. Agree the Terms of Reference for Community Networks as detailed in section 6 of the report.
  - iii. Agree the proposals in relation to initial governance models as detailed in section 7 of the report.
  - iv. Approve Option 2 – Phased Implementation - as detailed in section 9.

### **Report Authors:**

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Marie-Ann Jackson - Head of Stronger Communities

### **Background Papers**

1. Stronger Together: A Unitary Council for North Yorkshire – The Case for Change
2. The Council Plan 2023-27 (draft)
3. Transition (LGR) Overview & Scrutiny Committee (9 November 2022)
4. Guidance for Establishing Good Governance of Partnerships'. Surrey County Council (2010)

<b>Initial equality impact assessment screening form</b> <b>This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.</b>	
<b>Directorate</b>	Central Services
<b>Service area</b>	Policy, Partnerships and Communities
<b>Proposal being screened</b>	Community Networks
<b>Officer(s) carrying out screening</b>	Tom Jenkinson, Stronger Communities Delivery Manager
<b>What are you proposing to do?</b>	As a key element of the new North Yorkshire Council's locality-based delivery model the Council intends to introduce Community Networks centred around the significant economic, cultural and social assets of market towns, surrounding villages and natural communities in North Yorkshire. Over time every place will be part of a geographically identified Community Network.
<b>Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?</b>	<p>The vision for Community Networks is that they will mobilise the energy, resources and partner relationships that exist in our communities to deliver the most appropriate local solutions for their people and place. Community Networks will enable local action by bringing local people, partners and communities together to identify and deliver against priorities and acting as local agents for economic and social change. Although they will not have a devolved budget the Council anticipates that they will provide a mechanism for localities to apply for and ideally obtain external investment (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Funding).</p> <p>This proposal was one of four interconnected pillars of the locality based delivery model which was the focus of North Yorkshire County Council's successful submission to government for the establishment of a unitary council. As the new North Yorkshire Council's vesting day of 1 April 2023 approaches planning for the Community Networks is accelerating.</p> <p>The intention is that Community Networks will support and enable greater collaboration between local Councillors, public sector agencies, communities and businesses to develop plans around shared interests and act to get things done in their local area with the result that communities become more self-reliant and resilient. One of the expectations is that the partnership of stakeholders in each local Network will develop ten-year local action plans based on shared local priorities.</p> <p>The geographies of each Network will be subject to consultation with local communities and it is expected that the nature and make-up of them will evolve and flex over time, to meet local needs and priorities.</p>
<b>Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources?</b> Please give details.	Community Networks will be new structures independent of the Council. There is no associated removal of resources. There will be a low level of investment predominantly in officer time. They will not hold a

	<p>devolved budget. They will be supported by and connected to the Council through relationships which will require some resource allocation in terms of time from Council Officers. A team of community officers will help with local coordination, specialist advice and network development. A Senior Manager (Assistant Director or above) will be the named lead officer for each Network acting as the key link between the Council and the Network at senior level.</p> <p>Members will also be involved within their local Network.</p> <p>There is likely to be a small funding allocation to support secretariat functions with this probably outsourced to a local voluntary sector organisation in each place.</p>
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**Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYCC’s additional agreed characteristics**

As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:

- To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics?
- Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important?
- Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to?

**If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked ‘Don’t know/no info available’, then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your [Equality rep](#) for advice if you are in any doubt.**

Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don’t know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Sex		X	
Race		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Religion or belief		X	
Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage or civil partnership		X	

People in rural areas		X	
People on a low income		X	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		X	

<p><b>Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts</b> (e.g. disabled people’s access to public transport)? Please give details.</p>	<p>The proposal involves the bringing together representatives of local stakeholder organisations. We know that some people may find it more difficult to engage with or be involved in activity including employment, civic engagement or volunteering for reasons of age, disability, caring responsibilities and rurality in particular. We would expect all organisations participating to have policies and procedures in place to support people across all protected characteristics to get involved in their organisation if they wish to do so and meet any other relevant criteria. Early support provided by the Council will include compilation of a</p>
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	<p>handbook for Networks to help guide them through various processes and considerations including those relating to equalities. This approach worked well when delivering the Community Libraries programme. One of the obvious issues for Networks will be ensuring that meetings are held in accessible venues and supported by technology as appropriate. Access will include ensuring that transport to venues is considered when planning in person meetings.</p> <p>Council officers will also support Networks to Identify issues in their community, particularly those that result in inequalities so that these can be addressed and to involve the wider community through participatory and engagement activities. All engagement and participatory activities would be undertaken in ways which reduced or eliminated barriers related to protected characteristics for example by using a range of activities and platforms.</p>			
<p><b>Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics?</b> Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.</p>	<p>The proposal will ask other organisations to engage in partnership working which is a familiar and successful approach across the County. We do not expect involvement in Networks to add a heavy resource demand on organisations involved but will be seeking to develop a way of operating in consultation with organisations choosing to participate. The partner organisations will determine how their Network runs and will take individual responsibility to ensure no adverse impact for them. We would anticipate that all these organisations will involve or support some people with protected characteristics and for some this will be their primary focus. The intention of the Networks is to maximise positive outcomes for local communities through the power of collaboration. This should have positive impacts on residents across all or most protected characteristics over time.</p>			
<p><b>Decision (Please tick one option)</b></p>	<p>EIA not relevant or proportionate:</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Continue to full EIA:</p>	
<p><b>Reason for decision</b></p>	<p>The introduction of Community Networks should have positive impact on all residents. Individual decisions or actions of Community Networks will give due regard to any impacts on people with protected characteristics. No adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics have been identified through this screening exercise. Community Networks will be rolled out gradually rather than in a “big bang” which will allow any unanticipated adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics to be identified and addressed if they arise.</p>			
<p><b>Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)</b></p>	<p>Neil Irving</p>			
<p><b>Date</b></p>	<p>6 February 2023</p>			



**Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment**

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process. If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email [climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk)

<b>Title of proposal</b>	<b>Community Networks</b>
<b>Brief description of proposal</b>	As a key element of the new North Yorkshire Council's locality based delivery model the Council intends to establish Community Networks centred around the significant economic, cultural and social assets of market towns, surrounding villages and natural communities in North Yorkshire. Over time every place will be part of a geographically identified Community Network. Current estimates are for there to be around 30 Networks.
<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Central Services</b>
<b>Service area</b>	<b>Policy, Partnerships and Communities</b>
<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Marie-Ann Jackson</b>
<b>Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment</b>	<b>Tom Jenkinson, Stronger Communities Delivery Manager</b>

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one. Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings
- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

Environmental factor to consider	For the county council	For the county	Overall
Greenhouse gas emissions	No effect on emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste
Water use	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution

Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

<b>Decision (Please tick one option)</b>	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Continue to full CCIA: <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Reason for decision</b>	<p>Community Networks will bring together local partners in geographic localities generally centred around a market town or other significant settlement to identify and deliver against shared local priorities and act as local agents for economic and social change. Composition will include local Councillors, public sector agencies, communities and businesses. The overarching aim is for communities to become more self-reliant and resilient.</p> <p>The Networks will receive Council support through officer time, data, guidance but will be independent of the Council. Some very low level environmental impacts are possible but these can either be mitigated against or will be positive. As the Networks are intended to bring people together there may be some increased travel and in rural areas this is likely to be by private car. However Networks will be in relatively small geographic areas so travel will be minimal and relationship building will support car sharing etc. In addition this forum may reduce the need for other meetings and associated travel. As Networks become embedded there will be opportunities for them to adopt net zero and environmental sustainability priorities as part of their local action plans.</p> <p>Depending on the issues which each Network chooses to have as a focus there is potential for some positive action to make communities more able to respond at local level to adverse weather events and to protect local heritage and landscape and contribute to net zero. These actions will however sit within the broader context of national and local government and their decisions and actions which are likely to have far greater impact.</p>	
<b>Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)</b>	Neil Irving, Assistant Director	
<b>Date</b>	6 February 2023	