

**Meeting** Executive

**Portfolio Area** Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council

**Date** 8 July 2020



## A CO-OPERATIVE INCLUSIVE ECONOMY CHARTER

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval of a Cooperative Inclusive Economy Charter in support of the Council's approach to Community Wealth Building.
- 1.2 To include this Charter within the wider action for Community Wealth Building.
- 1.3 To identify how this charter can support the local economy including recovery post the COVID-19.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive approves the Co-operative Inclusive Economy Charter, as at Appendix A to the report, and agrees to its launch in July 2020, making an early contribution to the Council's plans for economic recovery.
- 2.2 That Executive approves the proposed action plan, as set out in Paragraph 4.6 of the report.
- 2.3 That Executive approves the content of the Council's pledge, as set out in Paragraph 4.8 of the report.
- 2.4 That the Charter is monitored by a single working group, reporting to a cross-party advisory Community Wealth Building Board, chaired by the Leader.

- 2.5 That the working group develops a set of metrics to help measure the impact of Community Wealth Building on the Stevenage economy.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 11 March Executive resolved:
1. That an Inclusive Economy Charter be developed and launched by the end of June 2020, underpinned by an action plan, this Charter to include a space for communities and stakeholders to pledge their support.
  2. That the Council pilots a Community Balance Sheet in partnership with its Cooperative Neighbourhoods Programme, and that this Balance Sheet be published alongside its annual statement of accounts.
  3. That the Council agrees a set of metrics to measure the impact of Community Wealth Building (CWB) on day-to-day business, and that this process be supported by a cross-departmental working group.
  4. That the Council facilitates a CWB Group to review progress and to validate findings of impact work, and to support the Council to share best practice at a regional and national level.
- 3.2 Since the meeting of the Executive on 11 March, the impacts of Covid-19 have resulted in a slight delay in the launch of the Inclusive Economy Charter and have further raised the profile of Community Wealth Building and the contribution it can make to building local economic resilience. Most commentators now expect the UK to enter a deep recession, with lockdown resulting in the furlough of more than six million employees and unprecedented demand for Universal Credit.
- 3.3 In Stevenage, the Council worked with partners to set-up Stevenage Helps, as a way of mitigating the immediate effects of lockdown. This showed the high level of need for emergency provision with over 600 emergency food parcels delivered. Services such as Citizens Advice Stevenage are already experiencing increased demands in money, debt and employment advice as payment holidays and the national furlough scheme comes to an end.
- 3.4 The Council is continuing to work with colleagues from the Business School at the University of Hertfordshire to support Community Wealth Building activities.
- 3.5 These activities include reviewing findings from a survey of Council suppliers, which had a response rate of 28%. The survey included questions on organisational size, supply chains, and number of local employees. In addition to the survey, the University has offered to co-facilitate the proposed working group and to support the development of indicators to track the impact of recession on local communities.
- 3.6 These indicators will provide an up-to-date evidence-base to measure the impact of the Charter, along with the other Community Wealth Building activities.
- 3.7 The indicators will be identified by a working group guided by the four foundations of Community Wealth Building, with an internal and external lead

attached to each foundation. This will help to engage other anchor institutions, which could potentially include the Lister Hospital and HCC.

- 3.8 Tracking the impact of any COVID-19 recession and the contribution made by the Charter to economic recovery will support the Council and its partner to respond quickly to funding opportunities.

#### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Changes to the Government’s Furlough Scheme are scheduled to take place at the end of July and October. These bring with them the risk of higher unemployment. The proposed Charter is set out in Appendix A. Launching the Charter in July enables the Council to raise the profile of CWB at the earliest point.
- 4.2 Delaying the launch would risk losing momentum with other stakeholders, who by then, might be overwhelmed by rising demand for their services. There is also a risk that opportunities to feed into regional and national funding programmes will be missed.
- 4.3 At its meeting on 11 March 2020, Executive agreed an internal group to develop metrics and an external group to share best practice and validate findings. It is now proposed that these groups are merged into a single group, with objectives linked to the foundations of Community Wealth Building.
- 4.4 Merging the groups will help to keep the agenda moving forward, providing support for restart, and helping to build the types of partnerships that are needed for a sustainable rebuild.
- 4.5 The working group will be facilitated by the Council with the support of the University of Hertfordshire. The involvement of other stakeholders will help to demonstrate the partnerships needed to lever funding. The group will report to an advisory cross-party Community Wealth Building Board, chaired by the Leader of the Council.
- 4.6 In light of the pressures on all organisations since Covid-19, the Charter action plan only covers immediate milestones. This will help to convince stakeholders that the Charter has immediate relevance and isn’t something to be deferred until the current pandemic subsides. The Charter also provides space for residents to pledge their support, which builds upon the important role of volunteering during lockdown.

CWB Foundations	Actions	Initial Review Dates
1, Procurement and Social Value	1a, review findings of SME survey. 1b, produce initial community balance sheet.	1a, August 2020. 1b, October 2020.
2, Training and	2a, Stevenage Works fully engaged in first working group. 2b, Brief for Third Sector	2a, July 2020. 2b, October

Skills	Development Plan developed with University.	2020.
3, Cooperative and Social Economy Growth.	3a, Social Inclusion Partnership holds first recovery meeting. 3b, Council and University research options for joint delivery group with VCSE. *	3a, July 2020. 3b, October 2020.
4, Tackling Climate Change	4a, capture environmental impacts as part of community balance sheet. 4b, incorporate working sustainably within sector development plan.	4a, Oct 2020. 4b, Oct 2020.

*\*potential focus of this group shown in Appendix B, helping to create a more inclusive economy by creating entry level opportunities for people who experience barriers when trying to compete in a crowded labour market. Includes helping to mitigate the loss of apprenticeships for young people.*

4.7 To further engage stakeholders, the Charter includes examples of activities to support an inclusive economy, and space for signatories to make a personalised pledge. At launch, it is suggested that the Council publishes its own pledge statement comprising key activities already underway.

4.8 These early pledge activities are shown in the table below.

Pledge 1	Formally considering local supply chains as part of procurement exercises wherever possible.
Pledge 2	Accelerating Stevenage Works by working with major contractors to increase access to training and jobs.
Pledge 3	Working with local business support to develop provision of advice and support locally to build cooperative and social enterprise economy.
Pledge 4	Measuring social, economic and environmental impacts using community balance sheets.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

5.1 As stated in the Community Wealth building report to the Executive on 11 March 2020, there is no General Fund budget provision for this programme, however this work will require some dedicated programme management supported in order to accelerate at pace.

- 5.2 The Council continues to support the Community Wealth Building agenda through the Communities and Neighbourhoods Business Unit, which is supplemented by in-kind support from the University of Hertfordshire. The Council and University continue to monitor funding opportunities and are exploring opportunities for partnership working. These include the potential to approach funders in support of a Skills Plan for the Third Sector, helping it to navigate diminishing resources and rising demand.
- 5.3 The Council had already started to embed some Community Wealth Building activities within existing work. These include support to the relaunch of the Social Inclusion Partnership by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team.
- 5.4 The Council has prepared an application to Herts Growth Board, although the outcome of this is not yet known, this is in addition to the launch of Charter.

#### **Legal Implications**

- 5.5 There are no direct legal considerations, however indirectly the Charter and wider Community Wealth Building work should be taken into consideration when the Procurement Strategy is revised later this financial year.
- 5.6 A data sharing agreement is in place with University of Hertfordshire to ensure compliance with data protection legislation.

#### **Risk Implications**

- 5.7 Where external funds are applied for, or received, a full risk register will need to be produced including provisions made for the council to manage the funds, and to assess proportionality of funds against outputs and results.
- 5.8 Where small scale pilot activities take place, a local risk register should be produced in partnership with relevant services, e.g. community development, in order to ensure there are no negative impacts on capacity to deliver existing services.
- 5.9 Where this pilot work includes engagement with external stakeholders, a risk register should take into account how the Council maintains a leadership role in order to ensure join-up.

#### **Policy Implications**

- 5.10 Where CWB is considered a cross cutting theme, there are potential implications on a number of policies. These include procurement, and the monitoring of the Charter will be supported by involving the Procurement Manager in the CWB Working Group.
- 5.11 Join-up across policy development is further supported by inviting the Corporate Policy and Research Officer onto the Working Group.

#### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.12 Climate change is included as one of the key foundations of CWB. Therefore, impacts are expected to be positive. Cross referencing to emerging climate change strategy will be facilitated by the Working Group.

## **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.13 These will be considered and monitored where any pilot work is undertaken and are expected to be positive. For example, a key reason for supporting cooperative and social economy growth is to reduce inequalities by supporting job creation for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:**

BD1 Executive Report March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, Community Wealth Building

## **APPENDICES**

- A Draft Inclusive Economy Charter  
B CWB and Recovery Diagram