

# **Title of report: Building Strong Connected Communities, Talk Community Strategy, 2024 - 2027**

**Meeting: Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting Date: 3 October 2024**

**Report by: Community Wellbeing, Improvement and Development  
Consultant**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

All Wards

## **Purpose**

To provide the opportunity for the scrutiny committee to consider the newly refreshed strategy for Talk Community.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That the committee:**

- 1. Comment on the refreshed strategy for Talk Community as the outcome of the Talk Community review (attached as Appendix A).**
- 2. Endorse the strategy and agree that officers will report annually on progress to the health and wellbeing scrutiny committee.**
- 3. Note the response to the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee of 29 January 2024 attached as Appendix B.**

## **Alternative options**

1. Do nothing. The Talk Community strategy will be implemented without comment from scrutiny committee members.

## Key considerations

1. In 2019 and 2020, the council provided seed funding for a network of Talk Community Hubs across the county and in 2021 established Talk Community as its asset-based community development function. Since Covid 19, the council and its partners have sought to harness the power and knowledge of Herefordshire's communities to design solutions that respond to local need that can be delivered closer to communities, especially given the rural nature of the county and transport challenges.
2. A strategic review of Talk Community was undertaken between November 2023 and May 2024. The aim was to develop a strategic framework for Talk Community going forward to ensure that the contribution to prevention and early help and building stronger communities would be maximised. Building Strong Connected Communities, Talk Community Strategy, 2024 – 2026 is the outcome of the review. The strategy and appendices are attached as Appendix A to this report.

The review was informed by:

- an analysis of the legislative framework and the strategy and policy landscape within which Talk Community operates;
  - an analysis and review of quantitative and qualitative data held by Talk Community to understand reach and impact;
  - the views from stakeholders, internal and external to the council
  - engagement with Talk Community hubs; and
  - assessment of the use and value of the Talk Community website and directory
3. A summary of the national and local legislative, policy and strategy landscape that is relevant to Talk Community is set out in Appendix 1 of the strategy. In 2019 the council identified a number of drivers for establishing Talk Community. These are still relevant today and include
    - rurality and transport challenges
    - the need to bring services and support closer to communities to increase participation in community life
    - increasing demand for health and social care and complexity of need
    - reducing public sector finance
  4. Between December 2023 and April 2024 a programme of stakeholder events were held to help, visits to hubs were made, interviews were conducted with statutory and community stakeholders and an audit of the hubs was undertaken. Details of the programme and feedback from stakeholders is set out in Appendix 2 of the strategy.
  5. The review concluded that
    - Talk Community is highly trusted by a significant element of the voluntary and community sector and plays a key role in supporting the sector to access funding
    - Talk Community has grown considerable community capital which contributes to communities being more resilient and has developed activities and programmes that maximise wellbeing and independence.
    - It acts as the 'glue' in building the capacity of VCSE organisations and hubs (some of which are more mature) than others to deliver support and activities at local level.

However,

- A lack of outcome measures means it has been a struggle to measure impact.

- Talk Community has not been delivering its work within a strategic framework, shared and understood by all stakeholders
  - Lack of understanding generally that Talk Community is more than just the hubs and the need to strengthen communication to ensure the whole service offer is visible
6. A refreshed vision and outcomes for Talk Community were developed collaboratively with partners, community organisations and councillors. The refreshed vision for Talk Community is

**Working together to build strong and connected communities where people can thrive**

With the **aim** of enabling stronger communities across Herefordshire, that are resilient and are empowered to input into decisions that affect their community. The **outcomes** that the council will achieve through Talk Community are :

1. Individuals and communities across all ages are supported to access early help through pro-active promotion and delivery of activities and programmes to prevent and reduce demand for health and social care.
  2. Communities are stronger with increased partnership working within communities and with statutory agencies.
  3. Communities are able to influence decision making and empowered to co-design solutions and services that meet identified need.
7. To deliver these outcomes, a series of actions are set out in the strategy for 2024/25 and 2025/26. These actions will form the basis of an annual delivery plan which will be monitored and adjusted to respond to emerging needs over the three year period of the strategy. These actions are set out below:

<b>Delivery in 2024-2025:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● implement a Talk Community communications strategy by November 2024 to ensure stakeholders receive the information they need in a timely way and in a format that meets their needs</li> <li>● Invest £2 million capital funding to strategically improve community infrastructure inviting bids from community organisations, including but not limited to existing Talk Community hubs to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ transform and better utilise existing/unused buildings for community benefit</li> <li>○ improve spaces for communities to connect and for events and activities to be delivered at local level</li> <li>○ increase opportunity for people to access integrated services in their community</li> <li>○ targeting areas of health inequalities and deprivation</li> </ul> </li> <li>● develop an outcomes and evaluation framework for Talk Community to enable the council to measure impact</li> <li>● strengthen the early help and prevention offer for all, through co-production but particularly for children, young people and families and seek funding to support community based activities designed through co-production</li> <li>● improve the information and advice service to ensure residents can access the support they need and self-help and that it is compliant with the Care Act 2014</li> </ul>

- establish an evidence base for each locality combining top-down analysis of vital statistics with systematic 'bottom-up' intelligence from residents and Talk Community staff embedded in our communities
- design a mechanism for 'community intelligence' gathered at hyper-local level to be fed up the system to influence strategy, service design and commissioning

#### **Delivery in 2025-2026**

- build on the existing capacity in Talk Community to provide advice to VCSE partners to maximising income and fund-raising
- review Talk Community performance and impact in 2024/25
- agree priorities and an annual planning and delivery (organising) framework for each locality which will be sufficiently flexible to enable inclusion of projects and activities in response to new community needs and external events that may occur within the year

### **Community impact**

8. The delivery of the council's community based asset development function within a shared and understood strategic framework will ensure that maximum community benefit is achieved and the opportunity for local communities to influence service development will be increased.

### **Environmental Impact**

9. Increasing the availability of services at local level will reduce the need for travel and impacts on the environment.

### **Equality duty**

10. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

11. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

12. The Talk Community review identified a weakness in that the council have not agreed a monitoring and evaluation framework for the work. As a result the data on beneficiaries does not enable a robust understanding of how we are meeting our equalities duties. A key action in the first year of the strategy will be to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, this will ensure that equalities data is embedded in the framework and the link to health inequalities will be explicit.

**Resource implications**

13. There are no immediate resource implications. The strategy will be delivered within the Talk Community budget.

**Legal implications**

14. There are no legal implications

**Risk management**

15. The decision to carry out a strategic review of Talk Community was informed by the need to better understand the value of the work and the contribution to council priorities.

<b>Risk / opportunity</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Maximise the contribution of Talk Community to building community resilience and through that, reducing demand for health and social care	Implementation of a vision and strategic framework shared and understood by all partners.
The council is not able to evidence the impact of the investment in Talk Community.	An outcomes and impact measurement framework will be developed.
The contribution of Talk Community to council priorities may not be clear.	Development and monitoring of an annual delivery plan.

16. If the recommendation is approved, the relevant risks will be managed and entered in a risk register at a service level. Risks will be escalated in accordance with the council’s Risk Management Plan.

**Consultees**

17. As part of the strategic review of Talk Community consultation and engagement took place with Herefordshire’s voluntary and community sector, other council services, health providers, Talk Community volunteers and hubs and councillors.

**Appendices**

- Appendix A Building Strong Communities, Talk Community Strategy 2024-2027
- Appendix B Summary of recommendations to the executive and executive responses
- Appendix C Talk Community hubs

**Background papers**

**Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:**

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	Click or tap here to enter text. Date 25/09/2024
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
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**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**