

Cabinet

23 January 2024

Creating Opportunities Update

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the progress made to date on Levelling Up and Community Powered Warwickshire and endorses the 'Journey So Far' Review document at Appendix 1 for publication; and
2. Supports the adoption of the Creating Opportunities approach going forward, noting the two plans agreed for Stratford District and Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough and WCC's contribution to them.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Levelling Up was first set out by national government in the Levelling Up White Paper published in 2022 and legislated in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- 1.2 The national policy seeks to address long standing inequalities that exist within and between individuals, communities and groups.
- 1.3 In July 2022 Cabinet approved the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up providing a local definition of Levelling Up and an understanding of the local issues, which translated national policy into an approach for Warwickshire that builds on the strengths of our communities and tackles the longstanding challenges facing some of our residents and places.
- 1.4 Since the publication of the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up, working collaboratively with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council, two Creating Opportunities place plans have been developed which identify the local priority places and groups where to targeted interventions are being pursued.
- 1.5 Eighteen months on from first publishing the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire there have been great successes in embedding a new approach across the county and with partners. It is now a suitable time to create a digital home for work across Warwickshire and projects connected to Creating Opportunities which is why a Creating Opportunities microsite has

been created. The site will link to 'news' updates on projects being led by other authorities and content will be managed by WCC.

1.6 Alongside this site, which will highlight current and yet to come projects that connect to the four-part local definition of Levelling Up:

- Tackling inequalities
- Increasing social mobility
- Ensuring sustainable futures
- Empowering communities

1.7 The County Council wishes to appraise progress so far and reflect on the achievements made through our 'Creating Opportunities – Journey So Far' review document which is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Existing budgets will be used for costs relating to the microsite.

3. Environmental Implications

3.1 Sustainable Futures is one of the four agreed elements of our definition of Levelling Up and is foundational to Creating Opportunities in Warwickshire.

3.2 The emerging Sustainable Futures Strategy and *Creating Opportunities* place plans will further help embed work on climate.

4. Supporting Information

4.1 Since the publication of a Countywide approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire, the programme has developed considerably, and the branding has evolved to reflect this progress. *Creating Opportunities* is now the umbrella brand, unique to Warwickshire, used for projects and plans associated with Levelling Up, reducing inequalities, increasing social mobility and Community Powered Warwickshire.

4.2 The review document aims to bring together progress so far on Levelling Up and Community Powered Warwickshire and showcase current successes as well as demonstrating how the programmes will intersect going forward.

4.3 The review document highlights the following:

- Context of Levelling Up & Community Powered Warwickshire
- Recent strategies that embed Creating Opportunities

- Local community examples of Creating Opportunities including projects funded by Warwickshire County Council's Social Impact Fund and Green Shoots Community Fund
 - Ongoing and future projects including three community powered place pilots
- 4.4 Warwickshire County Council's Social Fabric Fund, which launched in the summer of 2023, will be an important element of Creating Opportunities going forward. The fund which totals £2.5million aims to support communities build their own solutions, particularly in the county's identified priority places. The fund has an indicative split of 40% revenue and 60% capital funding and will run over two years up to 31 March 2025.
- 4.5 Warwickshire County Council has already received many Expressions of Interest from groups wishing to secure funding. A number of these have made it through to a second round of consideration. The Councils anticipates receiving more Expressions of Interest before the closing date.
- 4.6 At a national level devolution is also linked to the Levelling Up agenda. Locally, comprehensive work on devolution was undertaken in 2023 and the position reached was Warwickshire would not at that time pursue a deal which involved a mayor or directly elected leader at Level 3. Following the Government's Autumn statement, deals at Level 2 may now be possible and the County Council has expressed an interest. We await further dialogue with Government in order to progress.
- 4.7 As the Creating Opportunities programme further progresses the aim will be to produce an annual review that reflects our delivery against our 2030 targets.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 Key dates and next steps are set out below:
- 15 January 2024 - Stratford-on-Avon District Council Cabinet for Growing Opportunities Plan delivery plan approval
 - 1 February 2024 - Publication of Journey So Far document and microsite

Appendices

1. Journey So Far Review Document
2. Creating Opportunities in Nuneaton and Bedworth Place Plan
3. Growing Opportunities in Stratford-on-Avon Place Plan

Background Papers

1. [Countywide approach to Levelling Up](#)
2. [Levelling Up in Warwickshire Evidence Base](#)
3. [Draft Creating Opportunities Microsite](#)

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):

Other members: Cllr Adrian Warwick – Chair of Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC
Cllr Parminder Singh Birdi – Vice Chair of Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC