

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Cabinet

### Date 22 May 2023

#### Title: Connecting Communities – A Strategy for Community Hubs and Libraries

<b>Portfolio(s):</b> Environment  Deputy Mayor	<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b> Councillor Sandra Graham  Councillor Carl Johnson
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#### Report from Service

**Area:** Environment

**Responsible Officer:** Samantha Dand

**Tel:** (0191) 643 7924

**Wards affected:** All

### PART 1

#### 1.1 Executive Summary:

Connecting Communities - A Strategy for Community Hubs and Libraries, sets out how the Authority will establish Community Hubs (Hubs) across North Tyneside.

The Hubs aim to make it as easy as possible for people to find out about and access a wide range of wellbeing services, skills and training support, and information and advice delivered by the Authority and its partners. They will build on the wealth of support and activities on offer in North Tyneside on any given day, often delivered by the community and voluntary sector and from locations like faith venues and community centres.

The six Hubs will be single locations from which multiple council and partner services can be accessed and delivered. They will create environments that enable our residents to find the right support, from those best placed to offer it by connecting with other local services ('spokes') in the wider community.

The aim of the strategy is to provide Community Hubs through optimising the use of the Authority's existing Customer First Buildings and Community Centres, ensuring value for money so residents and communities are able to thrive, now and well into the future.

#### 1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

(1) agree 'Connecting Communities – A Strategy for Community Hubs and Libraries' appended to this report.

### **1.3 Forward plan:**

28 days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 3 March 2023.

### **1.4 Council plan and policy framework**

The Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025, sets out bold ambitions for making the Borough an even greater place to live, work and visit by 2025. Community Hubs are fundamental to delivering those ambitions and how we build a thriving North Tyneside.

North Tyneside's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Equally Well 2021-2025, makes clear the challenge of health inequalities in the Borough. It commits to developing Community Hubs to support people to access services and support, and to create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.

The Library Strategy 2016-2021 agreed by Cabinet on 14 November 2016, set out a five-year plan to develop the library service, creating flexible and welcoming public spaces and opportunities for people to meet and participate in the social and cultural life of their community. This new Strategy incorporates a vision for libraries as an integral part of Community Hubs.

The Embedding Equality Programme agreed in 2021 aims to ensure the Authority meets its equality and diversity policy commitments and corporate equality objectives. Three of these objectives focus on ensuring our buildings, services and communications are accessible improving engagement with North Tyneside's diverse communities. Community Hubs will be an integral part of doing this.

The Raising Aspiration, Realising Ambition Strategy 2021-2024, details the North Tyneside Employment and Skills Service's vision to support residents with skills and abilities to realise their ambitions. The physical spaces and range of services delivered by Community Hubs will support the delivery of this vision for residents.

### **1.5 Information:**

#### **1.5.1 Background**

On 28 May 2019, Cabinet agreed to explore the Authority's approach to Community Hubs as part of its Customer Service Programme.

On 22 February 2021, Cabinet received a report on the progress of the Customer Service Programme which had been significantly shaped by the Authority's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Programme directly informed the Customer Service Programme priorities and approach.

At its meeting of 17 October 2022, Cabinet reviewed progress of the Customer Service Programme, including progress to develop a Community Hubs Strategy for the Borough.

#### **1.5.2 Current provision**

Currently, there are four Customer First Centres located across the Borough, each featuring a library and customer service offer to residents. There are also two community centres situated in the northwest of the Borough (John Willie Sams and the Oxford Centre). These two centres offer a range of services delivered by the Authority or by partners in the NHS and community and voluntary sector, to support residents to improve their health and wellbeing and access vital support to improve their lives.

A further eight branch libraries provide access to the library service in local areas across the whole of North Tyneside.

There is also a wealth of additional Authority, voluntary, healthcare and other partner providers already operating services in and around the localities served by Customer First Centres and Libraries.

The Authority appreciates that people and communities are using its buildings differently, impacted in part by the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing digital approaches to accessing services such as government welfare benefits. The Authority has seen a significant increase in people choosing to access information, advice and support online, however, it is not the experience of everyone; residents have told the Authority that buildings and face to face services are sometimes still needed and are important to them.

### 1.5.3 Connecting Communities – A Strategy for Community Hubs and Libraries (Connecting Communities Strategy)

The Connecting Communities Strategy has been developed with the purpose of bringing a range of services together in one location. Essentially, a 'one stop shop' for finding out about or using a wide range of services. These services will focus on promoting good health and wellbeing and strengthening community cohesion.

The Authority over the years, has been building and developing the social infrastructure required for the Connecting Communities Strategy. This includes delivering town centre libraries as part of the four Customer First Centres, an extensive network of branch libraries, state of the art sport and leisure facilities, a vibrant cultural offer, investment in excellent parks and an ongoing commitment to the Borough's public realm, which is part of the Ambition for North Tyneside agreed by Cabinet in 2018.

Strong partnerships such as those with the voluntary and community sector and NHS are mature and tested. In particular, working alongside the Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, to prioritise prevention and shift funding towards more preventative services, as well as delivering a proportionate universal offer for all residents.

The Connecting Communities Strategy builds upon the great work that has already been achieved and provides a vision and plan for the future of Community Hubs to ensure they continue to meet and respond to resident need on a local level.

The Strategy has the following five strategic aims:

- **prioritising prevention;** helping to reshape existing funding away from acute health and care services and into preventative action, to tackle long-standing health disparities, improve quality of life, sustain independence, and reduce costs
- **proportionate universalism;** being part of a universal offer across all stages of people's lives, with targeted support where inequality gaps are the widest

- **facilitating digital inclusion;** supporting residents to get online and engage with digital services by choice, rather than being forced online or left behind
- **valuing communities;** as active partners, ensuring services are able to respond and be flexible to evolving need, and
- **making best use of the Borough's social infrastructure,** including open spaces, to help people be physically active and connect with others

#### 1.5.4 Scope of the Connecting Communities Strategy

**Connecting and coordinating people and place** – the Connecting Communities Strategy sets out an ambition for six reimagined Community Hubs developed from existing services at:

- Wallsend Customer First Centre
- North Shields Customer First Centre
- Whitley Bay Customer First Centre
- The White Swan Centre, Killingworth
- John Willie Sams Centre, Dudley and
- The Oxford Centre, Longbenton.

The six Hubs will:

- **Understand local need** - each Hub will have an ongoing role working with local communities to understand their needs
- **Know what resources are available** - success of the Hubs will be reliant upon the detailed knowledge the hub teams have of their local area and the resources on offer to support and signpost residents
- **Collaborate** - Hubs will attract and host relevant Authority and partner services which address the wellbeing needs of the communities they serve
- **Connect local services** –Hubs will take a proactive role in working with other partner services and providers in their area and will foster close relationships with these spokes
- **Connect people to resources** - each of the six Hubs will have a single, integrated welcome point designed to help people navigate and make best use of what the Hub has to offer

**Delivering services and support** - each Hub will offer:

- **Increased access to libraries** – which includes a review of opening hours across libraries
- **Increased access to customer services** – supporting people to find out about and apply for Authority services and to help with concerns about the services they receive already.

- **Community meeting spaces and community activities** - the six Hubs will provide spaces for groups and organisations to meet and deliver activities, complementing the wider local offer
- **Digital inclusion support** – Hub teams will have the right equipment, knowledge and training to support people to be digitally included
- **Support to improve health, wellbeing and resilience** - supporting people to tackle their health and wellbeing needs, develop networks and build community resilience so they can make informed choices and access universal health and wellbeing support.

#### 1.5.5 Delivery of the Connecting Communities Strategy

An 18-month Delivery Plan will be developed and progress will be monitored by the North Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board, as part its monitoring of the Equally Well 2021-2025, action plan. This Strategy is part of the work to create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities and will be monitored by this subgroup of the overall Board.

A detailed benefits realisation plan will also be developed as part of the Delivery Plan, to ensure that close attention can be paid to how progress is being delivered against the stated outcomes for the strategy and the Hubs.

#### 1.6 **Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

##### Option 1

Cabinet approves the recommendations at paragraph 1.2 of this report.

##### Option 2

Cabinet does not approve the recommendations at paragraph 1.2 of this report.

##### Option 3

Ask officers to make amendments to the Connecting Communities Strategy and bring a further report to Cabinet for it to consider those amendments.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

#### 1.7 **Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reason:

North Tyneside's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Equally Well 2021-2025, makes clear the challenge of health inequalities in the Borough. The strategy will ensure that the Authority's buildings and services are focussed on meeting local need, continually reviewing and targeting support where its most needed helping to reduce the underlying causes of health inequalities.

The Connecting Communities Strategy also provides a refreshed plan for Libraries.

## 1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Connecting Communities – A Strategy for Community Hubs and Libraries

## 1.9 Contact officers:

Samantha Dand, Director of Environment, tel. (0191) 643 7294

Haley Hudson, Customer Services and Digital Strategy Manager, tel. (0191) 643 7008

Paul Youlden, Head of Sport Leisure and Libraries, tel. (0191) 643 5363

David Dunford, Senior Business Partner, tel. (0191) 643 7027

## 1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/ information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Report to Cabinet - We Listen, We Care - Customer Service Programme End of Phase Two Review 17 October 2022  
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s10006/We%20Listen%20We%20Care%20-%20Customer%20Service%20Programme%20End%20of%20Phase%20Two%20Review.pdf>
- (2) Report to Cabinet – An Ambition for North Tyneside Update 21 February 2022  
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s7901/An%20Ambition%20for%20North%20Tyneside%20-%20Update.pdf>
- (3) Health and Wellbeing Board Equally Well Strategy 2021-2025  
<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%202021-2025%20single%20pages.pdf>
- (4) Report to Cabinet – North Tyneside Council Customer Service Programme 22 February 2021  
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s5490/North%20Tyneside%20Customer%20Service%20Programme.pdf>
- (5) Report to Cabinet – A Digital Strategy for North Tyneside 20 January 2020  
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s2638/A%20Digital%20Strategy%20for%20North%20Tyneside.pdf>
- (6) Report to Cabinet - We Listen and We Care NTC Customer Service Programme 28 May 2019  
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s798/We%20Listen%20and%20We%20Care%20North%20Tyneside%20Council.pdf>
- (7) Report to Cabinet – Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy and Corporate Equality Objectives Review 27 March 2023  
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=822&Ver=4>
- (8) [Equality Impact Assessment](#)

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

It is expected that there will be no adverse financial impacts from adopting and delivering this Strategy. Any costs will continue to be met from existing Library and Customer First Centre budgets. If any future financial implications arise, these will be brought back to Cabinet and will be considered in any applicable Medium-Term Financial Plan.

### **2.2 Legal**

Public library services are funded and either run or commissioned by local government. Library Authorities (unitary, county or metropolitan borough councils) have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area (section 7). The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and Local Authorities may also offer wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities, or providing access to Wi-Fi and computers).

In providing this service, Local Authorities must, among other things:

- encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service (section 7(2)(b)), and
- lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (in accordance with section 8(3)).

### **2.3 Consultation/ community engagement**

Engagement to develop the Connecting Communities Community Hubs and Library Strategy, took place from July 2022 to January 2023. It consisted of specifically organised engagement events, as well as pre-arranged engagement activities with residents already being undertaken by the Authority's Participation, Advocacy and Engagement team and Healthwatch North Tyneside.

All feedback has been collated into a summary attached to the Connecting Communities Strategy and the content used to shape the Strategy.

Collectively this engagement work gathered the views of 28 organisations, 967 residents, 260 children, young people, parents, and families, and 132 Authority partner staff and volunteers.

#### **2.3.1 Internal Consultation**

The following internal engagement sessions were undertaken. Each group received a briefing to outline the background and rationale to the proposed Strategy and were asked to share feedback on a draft model and set of design principles.

- Four workshops with colleagues and teams working within the Authority's Library and Customer Service teams.
- An Authority Leadership Forum session.

- A meeting with representatives from Unison and GMB Trade Unions.
- Lead Members from the Authority's Cabinet.
- North Tyneside Council Culture and Leisure Sub Committee.

### 2.3.2 Community engagement

The following external engagement was undertaken.

- North Tyneside Council State of the Area Event 2022. Participants took part in a workshop and received a briefing to outline the background and rationale to the proposed Strategy (attached as Appendix One) and were asked to share feedback on a draft model and set of design principles.
- 'Increasing Digital Inclusion and Developing Community Hubs in North Tyneside' - an event with partners in the VCS and NHS. Participants took part in a workshop and received a briefing to outline the background and rationale to the proposed Strategy and were asked to share feedback on the challenges and opportunities of implementing the community hub model, described in the Strategy.

The following activity was arranged as part of wider engagement work undertaken for the Authority. As part of this, participants were asked what they wanted from a Community Hub.

- Big Community Conversation - what are your views on the 5 themes of Our North Tyneside Plan and what would help?
- Family Hubs - what do you want from a Family Hub?
- North Tyneside Council Equally Well Strategy 2022 - what's it like working in North Tyneside localities?

## 2.4 Human rights

The Community Hubs and Libraries described in the Strategy in Appendix One of this report, will proactively promote fairer access to more services for more residents.

## 2.5 Equalities and diversity

Delivery of the strategy will contribute to the delivery of the Authority's Embedding Equality Programme.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken for this Strategy and will be reviewed no later than seven months from the date of publication of the Strategy. This will ensure that any impact resulting from the Strategy's Delivery Plan, can be evaluated and where needed, alternative action taken.



Due to the expansion of services on offer, their locations across the Borough and the design principles set out in the Strategy the initial EqIA identifies a positive contribution to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
- fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

## 2.6 Risk management

There are no risk implications directly arising from this report.

## 2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report.

## 2.8 Environment and sustainability

One of the five strategic aims of the Community Hubs is:

- making best use of the Borough's social infrastructure, including open spaces, to help people be physically active and connect with others.

The Our North Tyneside Plan states that “We will reduce the carbon footprint of our operations and will work with partners to reduce the Boroughs carbon footprint.” This Strategy recognises the climate emergency and overall ambition to reach carbon net zero by 2030. Where possible, Community Hubs will contribute to reducing the council’s carbon footprint, along with encouraging and enabling everyone to reduce their carbon footprint.

## PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive
- Director(s) of Service
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)
- Chief Finance Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Assistant Chief Executive