

Connected Communities Strategy

2021 – 2026



Key Information

Author:	Chelsea Roberts, Communities Manager
Section/Directorate:	Public Spaces
Service Impact Assessment:	19 February 2021
External Consultation:	Voluntary & Community Sector consultation, 11 December 2020 – 16 February 2021
Internal Consultation:	Basildon Council Managers Group – September 2020 Senior Leadership Team – February 2021 Covid-19 Response Policy Review and Development Group – February 2021
Background Information:	Connected Communities Policy 2021 - 2026
Strategy Approval – Officer Level	Joseph Reay, Head of Innovation, February 2021
Strategy Approval – Member Level	Housing and Communities Committee, March 2021 (TBC)
Strategy Review Date:	March 2022
Service Impact Assessment Review Date:	February 2022

Content	Page
1. Introduction	4
2. Strategy Context	4 - 6
3. Strategy Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key actions;• Performance management and monitoring;• Governance	6 - 7
4. Links to other Policies	7
5. Appendices	7 - 10

1. Introduction

This document follows the Connected Communities Policy, which was published in January 2021 and sets out Basildon Council's vision to empower communities to feel a strong sense of self and identify and a strong connection to each other and the place in which they live. The policy is formed of three focus areas: Connected Neighbourhoods, Connected Council and Connected Partnerships. The Connected Communities Policy outcomes are as follows:

- Community leaders and groups are engaged and empowered to effect positive change in their communities.
- Communities feel listened to and as a result are effectively supported in their localities.
- Basildon Council is considered an open, flexible and accountable Council by the Borough's communities.
- Partnership opportunities are embraced and encouraged in order to benefit the Borough's communities.

This strategy sets out the steps to be taken to achieve the policy outcomes, using insight derived from an in-depth consultation exercise with communities themselves and community and voluntary sector (VCS) partners that took place from December 2020 to February 2021. The strategy also provides information about existing activity that aligns to the policy outcomes. This means the action plan can focus on filling the gaps in current delivery.

2. Strategic Context

The Connected Communities Policy priorities (see appendix 1) have been explored further during consultation with VCS partners and communities. This elicited two key insights. The first is that the policy outcomes are best achieved through an inclusive social movement, rather than a series of one-off, time-limited projects that do not result in sustainable outcomes. A social movement is defined as a loosely organised effort by a large group of people, in this context meaning that communities themselves are key to achieving the outcomes rather than council-led one-off projects. It is imperative that all communities are able to get involved in this, either through participation, leading activity or accessing information. The second insight gained through consultation is that needs often change, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, so the strategy action plan must be fluid and readdressed each year in order to reflect the changing needs of communities. Further, unlike many strategies, Connected Communities will grow organically each year and will be an ongoing journey that does not come to an end; there will always be communities that need supporting in different ways and council recognises this.

Existing activity

A number of the policy priorities are already being explored or are addressed by other Council policies and strategies. One recent example is embracing opportunities for digital inclusion, addressed in the new Digital Inclusion Policy and the Communities Team digital inclusion pilot taking place in Spring 2021. Another

very closely linked policy is the Inclusion and Diversity Policy, in which many of the priorities around encouraging community-led activity and supporting communities to feel a sense of belonging link to the Connected Communities work, and deliverables will therefore be aligned. Joined-up funding opportunities, reviewing service level agreements (SLAs) to include the policy outcomes, and joining up the Local Delivery Pilot and Creative People and Places programmes, are in progress and are included in the strategy action plan.

Service design work is already in motion within the council, which will greatly support the Connected Council vision. Corporate service reviews will be used to identify the barriers to community participation and engagement within individual processes, and service design tools are already in development that will support officers to co-produce and co-design service models with communities in order to break down these barriers and re-focus on the customer experience. There will be many opportunities for communities to co-design, trial, test and feedback on processes in order to better meet customer needs. Further, IT infrastructure developments will allow better communication and information among services, meaning that communities will be better signposted to opportunities no matter which part of the council they make initial contact with.

Community mapping has also already begun to explore the borough's assets and identify its community leaders, as well as building overall profiles of the borough's various ward demographics. To support this, Nurture Development, the Local Delivery Pilot's national partner, is working to identify areas of need and opportunity for community-led activity in the borough. This will help to build a better picture of the needs of Basildon's communities and the opportunities they face as well as helping to identify and reach out to the community leaders across the borough. It is essential that the Council and its partners continue to actively listen and share information. This can be achieved as part of the annual readdressing of the strategy action plan.

Similarly, a number of the suggestions raised during consultation are already being delivered by various council services, which suggests a need to further promote these activities within communities. This is addressed in the action plan. Comments were received about a need for front line services, such as revenue and benefits support, to be delivered within communities themselves. This service already performs extensive outreach in many innovative ways. There were also many comments about the need for a network of community groups and workers, which already exists in the Community Involvement Network, so again this could be promoted further. Inclusivity, our ability to provide inclusive services and support partners in doing so too, was a key consultation theme and is addressed in detail in the emerging Inclusion and Diversity strategy. Lastly, using vacant units for community groups is being explored by the Creative People and Places programme. More support could be provided to support VCS partners with applications and this will be addressed outside of this strategy.

Connected Neighbourhoods

The policy priorities for Connected Neighbourhoods include encouraging communities to support each other by uniting behind a common goal, such as that presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Discussions during consultation suggested

that this could be widened, to include uniting people behind a celebration or shared cause, such as celebrating Basildon's heritage as seen during the New Town's 70th Anniversary. Our consultation also showed that communities identify more with their local parish or town, rather than the borough as a whole, so community participation is more likely to succeed in a more local capacity. There are many opportunities to share information with local Town and Parish Councils, Residents' Associations and Schools to provide this hyper-local support to communities. The strategy action plan addresses the better sharing of information and empowerment on a local level through a series of pilots to establish five community hubs across the five towns: Basildon, Billericay, Wickford, Laindon and Pitsea. These could be within a business, communal space, local school or GP practice.

One of the main barriers raised to community participation is a lack of awareness of services and activity. This could be improved in various ways including:

- Developing an inclusive and accessible directory of services and opportunities
- Creating opportunities to participate within council services themselves
- Raising visibility of VCS services in communities
- Using local businesses such as shops, cafes and barbers as information sharing hubs
- Using the Community Involvement Network to share information
- Having a clear pathway for residents or communities who want to get involved.

Each of these is addressed in the strategy and action plan.

Connected Council

Policy priorities for the Connected Council area include enhancing the council's openness by being more flexible, and engaging communities to work with the council through effective communications and opportunities to co-produce. Many opportunities were identified during consultation to enable this:

- Giving communities an active voice through funding panels, project and event teams and within other council services in order to advocate on communities' behalf
- Using communications channels as a 'call to action' in order to encourage community accountability
- Raising awareness of council services
- Including openness and flexibility into the Council's organisational culture.

Various service design tools are already in development that will support officers to co-produce and co-design service models with communities, which will be essential in giving communities a genuine voice and re-focusing services on the customer experience and therefore becoming a more open council. Corporate service reviews afford opportunities to identify where barriers to community participation and engagement lie and how those barriers might be removed in order to better serve communities and become a more flexible council. Another priority for Connected Council is embracing digital opportunities, already evident through the adoption of the recent Digital Inclusion Policy and subsequent work

plans. We also need to consider how digital can be used to encourage community participation, such as through developing a volunteering mobile app for Basildon.

Connected Partnerships

Priorities for the Connected Partnerships area include connecting work programmes, funding opportunities and co-commissioning activity with communities and partners. The council is well placed to link up partners and communicate information and opportunities for joined-up working. However, opportunities to join up were perhaps not so well communicated within the organisation itself and this could inform an internal communications review. The central directory and Community Involvement Network will also provide good vehicles to connect partners. Linking up the key programmes of work such as the Local Delivery Pilot and Creative People and Places programme has already started, however this needs further development and is addressed in the strategy action plan. Further, we will work with SLA service providers to ensure the policy outcomes inform the SLA objectives.

3. Strategy action plan

Key actions

The action plan shown in appendix 2 sets out the key activities to be delivered in order to realise the policy outcomes.

Performance management and monitoring

Parts of the action plan will be delivered by the council, and other parts will be co-delivered with communities. Delivery will be monitored by the Communities Manager, supported by the Corporate Programme Management Office and the Service Design Lead. Relevant outcomes will be monitored using key performance indicators, which will vary from numeric indicators (e.g. number of services included in the Community Directory) to the creation of new principles and models. Further, future tracker surveys will allow us to measure how connected communities feel to various assets and the council itself. Benchmarking and best practice against other local authorities will allow us to establish how successful delivery is.

Governance

The strategy action plan will undergo an annual review to reflect any changing community needs. Revisions to the strategy will be approved by the Head of Innovation.

4. Links to other Corporate Policies, Strategies or Partner documents

This strategy has been developed using the framework set out in the Connected Communities Policy.

The Connected Communities agenda is very closely linked to the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021, the Local Delivery Pilot Basildon Plan and the Creative People and Places Basildon Plan. Further links to other documents are as follows:

- Health and Wellbeing Policy 2018
- Digital Inclusion Policy 2021-24
- Financial Inclusion Policy 2020-23
- Corporate Plan 2019– 22
- Social Value Policy 2020-23
- Leisure and Cultural Policy 2020-23
- Housing and Regeneration Strategy 2018- 2023
- Climate and Environment Strategy 2021- 2050

5. Appendices

Appendix 1. Policy priorities

Connected Neighbourhoods:

- Encourage communities to continue supporting each other
 - Covid-19 has reminded us that communities step up and make things happen when they are united around a common goal. We want to encourage communities to continue to support each other in this way and come together to achieve positive changes in their neighbourhoods.
- Intelligently allocate resources to particular neighbourhoods using insight
 - Working with ‘community huddles’ made up of residents and services to agree local priorities and co-delivery of action plans.
- Connect people to local assets
 - Working to support those that are feeling isolated and lonely through building local networks of people with shared interests, enthusiasm and ideas as well as increasing the impact of community infrastructure.
- Empower community leaders
 - Stepping away from a paternal role and instead seeking to inspire and support individuals to make a positive difference in their neighbourhoods.

Connected Council:

- Enhance openness and flexibility into the ethos of the Council
 - Reviewing Council processes that may discourage communities from working with us.
 - Seeking opportunities to involve communities in decision making, commissioning and delivery of projects.
 - Ensuring officers are available to support communities effectively.
- Embrace digital opportunities
 - Utilising the opportunities that the digital agenda offers to engage large numbers who want to participate in volunteering that aligns with

the commitment they want to make, ensuring that they can do as little or as much as they like, fitting around their busy lives.

- Closing the digital exclusion gap through identifying and embracing opportunities to improve digital skills and access to isolated communities.
- Engage communities to work with us
 - Ensuring effective engagement and messaging is used to have ever greater reach into our communities, sharing our work and engaging communities to work with us.

Connected Partnerships:

- Strategic collaboration and co-production with cross-sector partners
 - Using the Council's community leadership role to collaborate and co-design innovate solutions alongside our strategic partners to ensure communities are positively impacted and are at the heart of this agenda.
- Support our VCS effectively to meet their emerging needs
 - Working collaboratively and effectively with the local VCS to promote their services, enhance their reach, advocate on their behalf, help them build their capacity and importantly to work together.
- Connect major programmes of work and funding opportunities
 - Identifying opportunities for key programmes such as the LDP, CPP and the Health and Wellbeing programme to work together to better serve communities.
- Co-commission activity with partners and communities
 - Working with partners and communities to commission relevant activity that meets identified needs and aspirations within communities

Appendix 2. Strategy Action Plan

Pillar	Outcome	Actions
Connected Neighbourhoods	Community leaders and groups are engaged and empowered to affect positive change in their communities	Co-create a communications campaign plan to mobilise communities behind a common goal, issue or celebration, using a 'call to action' communication style.
		Conduct an in-depth community mapping exercise using existing and new insight to identify the local areas of opportunity and any need for community activity.
		Use findings from above to influence an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Pilot (with a plan to develop further pilots) to inform a list of borough-wide ABCD principles that can be used by communities.
		Work with VCS partners to develop an inclusive, digital community directory, which is a 'one stop shop' for those that want to participate in or share an idea.
		Influence and support the establishment of a community information hub using a test and learn model with a view to establish five hubs in total across the five towns.
	Communities feel listened to and as a result are effectively supported in their localities	Introduce a community voice(s) to an internal funding panel and an event planning team as a test and learn pilot (with a plan to influence other service areas to consider the inclusion of a community voice to similar activities).
Influence and support the development of the Community Involvement Network (CIN) through widening its membership to include more groups e.g. Town and Parish Councils, and encouraging co-deliverable activity.		
Provide a platform for community leaders to meet outside of the CIN, to share ideas and best practice across different communities.		
Connected Council	Basildon Council is considered an open, flexible and accountable Council by the Borough's communities	Encourage the adoption of an openness and flexibility behaviour framework within manager roles.
		Utilise the corporate service reviews and co-design tools to facilitate a mapping exercise to identify where the barriers to community participation are within processes.
		Support frontline service managers to promote their services in communities.
		Utilise the CRM system in order to better share the digital community directory across the organisation, ensuring communities and residents are directed accordingly no matter which department they are in contact with.
Connected Partnerships	Partnership opportunities are embraced and encouraged in order to benefit the Borough's communities	Work to align the various funding opportunities, making the application process more streamlined and ensuring opportunities to co-commission activity are maximised.
		Work with key partners delivering programmes in the borough (i.e. Local Delivery Pilot and Creative People and Places) to produce an action plan that clearly identifies co-deliverable activity.
		Work with SLA service providers to identify opportunities to deliver the policy outcomes through their agreements with us.

Monday to Friday
10am to 5pm



Basildon Council
BASILDON • BILLERICAY • WICKFORD

For translations, Large Print and Braille please call

Para obtener traducciones, por favor llame al número (Spanish)

অনুবাদের জন্য দয়া করে ফোন করুন (Bengali)

Aby uzyskać pisemne tłumaczenie proszę dzwonić pod numer (Polish)

如需翻译，请拨打 (Mandarin)

O překlád prosím zavolejte (Czech)

若需翻譯，請致電 (Cantonese)

Чтобы получить перевод на русский язык, позвоните по телефону (Russian)

Tercüme için lütfen arayın (Turkish)

برای ترجمه با این شماره تماس بگیرید (Farsi)

Pour obtenir une traduction, composez le (French)

بۆ تەرجومە ئەلەفۆن بکە بۆ ژمارەى (Kurdish)

للترجمة يرجى الاتصال (Arabic)

Per perkthim me shkrim ju lutem merni ne telefon (Albanian)

ભાષાંતર માટે કૃપા કરીને ફોન કરો (Gujarati)

ट्रांसलेशन के लिये कृपया कॉल करें: (Hindi)

Pentru traducere va rugam sunati (Romanian)

Untuk terjemahan harap hubungi (Indonesian)

Kwa tafsiri, tafadhali piga simu (Kiswahili)

ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰੋ (Punjabi)

Kana muchida kuturikirwa, tapota ridzai runhare kuna (Shona)

Pre preklad prosim volajte (Slovak)

Nếu quý vị cần dịch tài liệu, xin vui lòng gọi theo số (Vietnamese)

01268207955



Customers with a hearing or speech impairment can contact us using the Text Relay service. Dial 18001 followed by the full telephone number of the service you require. Calls are charged at your telecommunications provider's standard rate.