



# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

## Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy **2020 - 2025**

# Introduction

Warwickshire has a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector - one that has evolved over the years to reflect the changing demands of our local communities.

The Council has invested significant resources into working collaboratively with the voluntary and community sector. This strategy sets an ambitious programme which will enable a thriving, sustainable and dynamic voluntary and community sector to flourish and help improve the lives of individuals and communities in Warwickshire.

The need to connect with our communities to develop shared solutions to meet some of society's most challenging priorities is paramount. In many cases the voluntary and community sector is uniquely placed to help address local priorities and by working together we can achieve more by providing the right support at the right time to our communities.

Finally, I would like to thank the many contributors to this strategy. These include colleagues, teams and organisations from across the voluntary, community, public and private sectors who have contributed their time and shared their valuable knowledge and insight. I look forward to continuing to work with you all as we connect communities to improve the lives of individuals and communities in Warwickshire.



**Cllr Izzi Seccombe**  
Leader of Warwickshire  
County Council



**Monica Fogarty**  
Chief Executive of  
Warwickshire County  
Council



# Vision and Purpose

***A thriving, sustainable and dynamic voluntary and community sector that improves the lives of individuals and communities in Warwickshire.***

We recognise that within our communities there is a wealth of skills, resources, relationships and networks that we can build on. By working together we will capitalise on the strengths of our collective **assets** to make Warwickshire the best it can be, now and for future generations.

This strategy sets out how we will work with communities to deliver our key outcomes as set out in the Council Plan 2020-2025:

**Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent**

**Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training and skills and infrastructure**

## **Definition of voluntary and community Sector:**

"The part of an economy or society comprising non-government and non-profit-making organisations or associations, including charities, voluntary and community groups, cooperatives and social enterprises."

**Assets** can be physical (e.g. buildings, spaces, places), people (including their skills, talents and connections), organisations (e.g. formal and informal community groups, clubs, schools, public sector agencies and local businesses) and behaviours (e.g. trust and goodwill)



# Why do we need a strategy?

The way the public sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) work together in Warwickshire needs to change significantly over the coming years. Ongoing austerity, rising demand and complexity in the needs of customers is driving us all to seek new and innovative ways of working.

The challenge - given constrained resources and a rapidly changing environment, how can we enable and support a strong VCS that can provide solutions and different approaches to support Warwickshire residents?

## The way forward - achieving our vision

We believe there is a way this can be achieved through community focused services delivered at a local level, based on the needs of the local population – delivering services that work for the individual, the community and the public sector.

To achieve our vision, we need to build on our existing strong relationships with the VCS to enable and support new approaches to secure integrated, more efficient and community-led outcomes.

What the strategy does not do is set out commissioning intentions or specifics about what will and won't be funded. That comes later. The Warwickshire Place Based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process 2018/20 is gathering evidence on local issues in consultation with residents and

VCS organisations, in order to inform future investment decisions.

This strategy, as well as looking to create more sustainable and productive relationships with commissioned services and larger organisations, will also value the work of the VCS. We will ensure that these groups are enabled to contribute to the overarching outcomes that we are seeking to achieve for the benefit of all communities in Warwickshire.

Throughout our approach we will recognise the contribution made by the private sector, including micro-enterprise. Responsible businesses working as a force for good are essential to building a stronger community.

**“To meet the opportunities and threats of the future a new approach is needed that gives greater freedom and responsibility to our communities”**

(Civil Society Strategy, 2018)

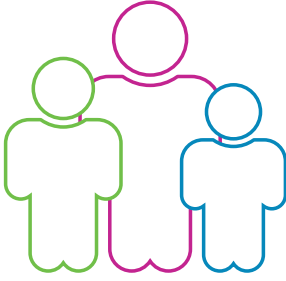
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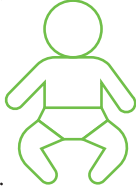
# Communities in Warwickshire

**Warwickshire in 2019** is a good place to live and work with high quality of life for most. However, like elsewhere, we are a diverse county facing inequalities and differences in opportunities and achievements amongst our communities.

The population of Warwickshire is changing, growing, and getting older. The county has been growing at above average rates in recent years, and this trend is set to continue.



There are approximately **125,000** children and young people aged 0-19 years, in Warwickshire who make up just under a quarter of the total population of the county.



Each year about **6,000** children are born.



The majority of the maintained school population in Warwickshire are of **White British ethnic origin (86%)**, and the largest minority ethnic group is **Indian (3%)**

Alongside the general growth in population will be a particularly high rate of increase in the numbers of older people living here. This clearly brings challenges in terms of service provision, particularly with regard to health and adult social care and the emergence of personalised service delivery.

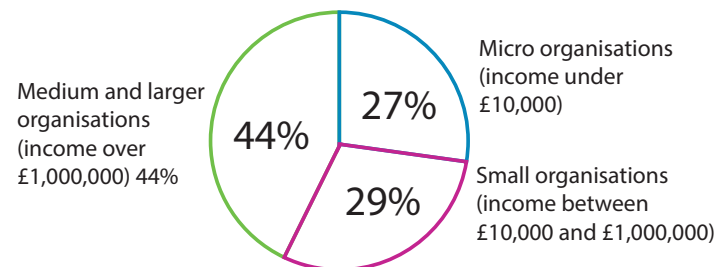
This will result in very significant changes as to how partners will provide care and support services in the near future. Alongside this challenge, there is the opportunity to ensure that every effort is made to harness the skills and experience of older people as a legacy for the future generations, and the views and aspirations of children and young people are fully taken into account by all services.

Warwickshire is perceived to be a generally affluent county, providing good quality of life and a pleasant environment for residents. However, inequalities of both opportunity and aspiration exist among and within our communities and are visible across all aspects of community life, from crime rates to life expectancy, unemployment to educational achievement



# Community and Voluntary Sector

Warwickshire has a thriving, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector with an estimated 10,000 organisations. These range from large national charities with multi-million pound turnovers to pioneering social enterprises and small “grass roots” community groups, all of which make an invaluable contribution to life in Warwickshire. Data from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations’ provides a useful profile of the sector as shown here:



It is widely recognised that these organisations are able to engage and develop the trust of vulnerable people in a way that statutory services sometimes find hard to do. In addition to their role as independent organisations in their own right, some help deliver public services, going beyond the minimum required by law, working in a preventative way which avoids additional costs to the public sector in the future.

**The State of the Sector (SoS) Report** published by Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (Warwickshire CAVA) in 2018 also showed that two-thirds of respondent organisations were operating at a local level, another 28% at a countywide level and 8% were operating at a national level. 89% of respondents stated that their dealings with the public sector are good.

Areas of further support required by the VCS were in developing their partnerships with other types of organisations, their ability to influence key partners, volunteering and fundraising. **The top three challenges** facing them in the next 5 years are: changes in funding (reductions and sources), increased and more complex demand on services and changes in workforce and succession planning.

**WCC invests in infrastructure support to the VCS**, and this contract is currently delivered by Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action. The core services provided through this contract are volunteer recruitment and support, information, training and funding advice, training and strategic representation of the sector. Overall feedback from a recent evaluation involving over 200 service users is that they value the infrastructure services and support currently provided and wish for these to continue.

Large national charities, pioneering social enterprises and small “grassroots” community groups, all make an invaluable contribution to life in Warwickshire



# Investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector

WCC investment in the VCS can be separated into several parts:

Infrastructure support to the sector is provided by way of three key contracts relating to the development of a stronger sector, the delivery of advice to residents and the promotion of equality and inclusion. The total value of this investment is in the region of £930,000 per annum.



**Infrastructure support approximately £930,000 a year**



**Around £50m in commissioned services from the VCS**

The Council, through its commissioning of a wide range of services, in particular services relating to the health and wellbeing of residents such as domiciliary care, residential care, disability support services and mental health services, invests around £50 million per annum in the VCS



**About £300,000 supporting communities with small grants**

The Council also invests in local communities by way of a number of grant streams, including the annual County Councillor Grant Fund, which results in around £300,000 being distributed to local voluntary and community groups in small grants, typically of under £1,000.

WCC directly delivers a number of initiatives and projects including community development work in targeted neighbourhoods, community engagement activities and forums, partnership coordination, financial inclusion projects and support to deliver the Armed Forces Community Covenant.



# Volunteering in Warwickshire



Almost **46%** of the population of Warwickshire aged over 16 have volunteered in the last 12 months.

Quality of life in Warwickshire is greatly enhanced by the contribution of volunteers. By supporting residents' wellbeing, boosting economic prosperity and enhancing our communities, volunteers make a huge contribution to making our county a great place to live, work and visit.

People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons. For some it offers the chance to give something back to the community or make a

difference to the people around them. For others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge. Regardless of the motivation, what unites them all is that they find it both challenging and rewarding. And ultimately, statistics show that volunteering is good for our physical and mental health and wellbeing.



It is estimated that **191,000** adults in Warwickshire regularly volunteer



giving around **91,000 hours** each week (*46% of the 16+ population*)



The economic value of this volunteering is approximately **£80.2 million** per annum, calculated by the number of volunteers x average number of hours x average hourly wage.

*\*(Based on NCVO national Almanac 2016/17 data)*

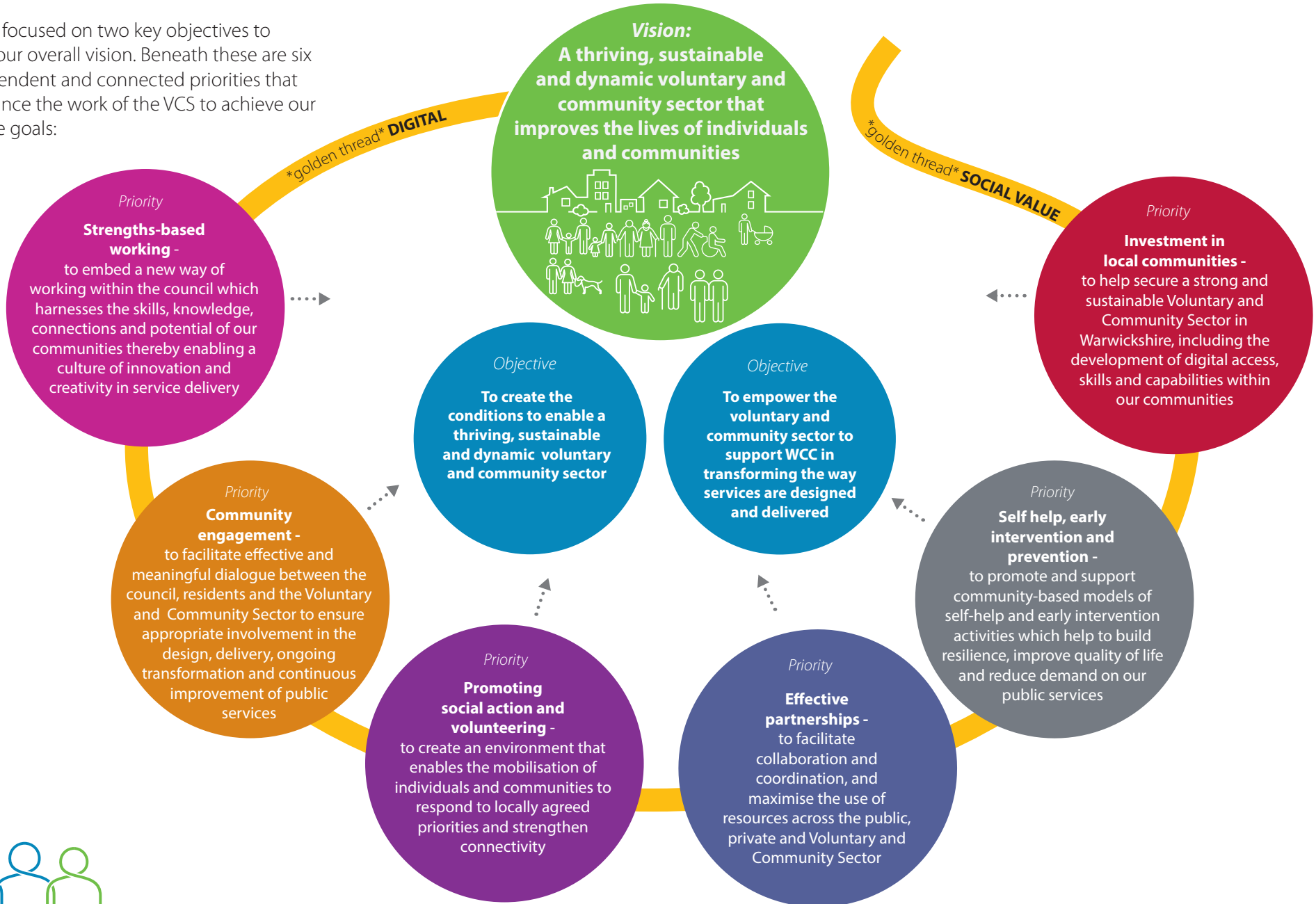
The number of volunteers per organisation ranges from 3 up to over 1,000. The variety of roles performed span from: trustees, formal volunteering with groups, clubs and organisations, participation in one-off activities (fetes, litter picks), skill sharing (time banks) to being a good neighbour. Volunteers also support various public sector bodies such as the Police, NHS and Probation Service. Warwickshire County Council is fortunate to have around **3,000** volunteers who help school governing bodies, youth justice services, libraries, countryside services, heritage and culture, social care and the environment. These volunteers give on average 30,000 hours per year.

Feedback from our VCS partners and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment consultations have identified a need to increase the number of volunteers active in the county to provide a strong community-based offer





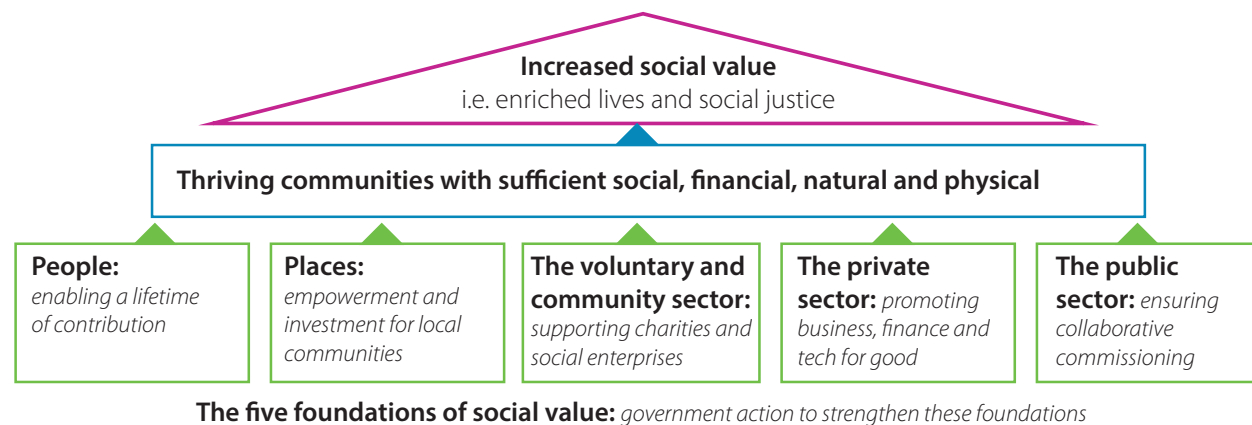
We have focused on two key objectives to achieve our overall vision. Beneath these are six interdependent and connected priorities that will enhance the work of the VCS to achieve our collective goals:



# The importance of social value

Social value is the golden thread throughout our strategy. Social value is about enriched lives and a fairer society for all. It's about communities having strong financial, physical and natural resources, and strong connections between people. This includes public funding, private investment, buildings and other community spaces. It also includes trust and goodwill, and the organisations and partnerships that bring people together.

At WCC, we believe this means that at all points of our service design and delivery we should consider social value. We should consider whether what we're doing adds greater benefit to our people and communities. This could be as small as offering our community buildings free of charge to priority groups or as big as developing social value through the procurement of major services. It also involves working with the private sector to maximise corporate social responsibility opportunities.



**“In thriving communities people have a sense of pride in the places where they live, feel able to get involved and take action to improve local life, and have control over the decisions which affect their neighbourhoods. Local public services are properly part of the community, as they are responsive and accountable to the people they support, and local businesses recognise and fulfil their obligations to the places they work in”**  
(Civil Society Strategy 2018).



# Our objectives

## To create the conditions to enable a thriving, sustainable and dynamic Voluntary and Community Sector we will:

- Reduce duplication and fragmentation of support and funding through a joined up, outcome focused approach to commissioning and delivery across the Council and embed social value into our decision making process
- Acknowledge that the voluntary and community sector is not one body, but a collection of many different bodies small and large and treat them equally and respectfully
- Promote and support the sustainability and independence of the voluntary and community sector and seek out opportunities to enrich and empower it
- Engage with the voluntary and community sector to better understand emerging changes and trends and respond as appropriate, ensuring Council services are connected into and signpost to them as a matter of course

## To empower the Voluntary and Community Sector to support WCC in transforming the way services are designed and delivered we will:

- Utilise the voluntary and community sector's knowledge and intelligence when commissioning services and co-produce services where appropriate
- As part of WCC service redesign consider where services could be delivered more effectively and/or efficiently by the VCS and promote a strengths -based approach within the Council
- Work collaboratively with voluntary and community sector partners on the basis of an equal relationship and encourage grassroots groups to contribute to and support the delivery of WCC services
- Provide clear and timely information and be explicit about our expectations so that together, we can enable individuals and communities to help themselves

### Digital

Digital is also recognised as a golden thread throughout this Strategy. It cuts across all 6 priorities and the expectation is that digital access and solutions will be considered across all activity as a means of enabling communities to be more connected and self-supporting.



# What will success look like?

To bring about the partnerships and transformation required to realise our ambition for this strategy we have identified six key priorities. To make a real difference these priorities must be pursued together and build upon the wealth of the good practice already in place. In consultation with our partners we will develop robust outcomes which measure the social impact of what is being delivered.

**In five years we will know if we have been successful, in the following ways:**

## **Strengths-based working:**

- WCC staff will have “new conversations” with customers and communities that identify and build on the strengths and assets that exist across Warwickshire to support individuals and communities to achieve positive change based on their own priorities and enable us to target services for our most vulnerable residents.
- Through an increased focus on community strengths the VCS will be empowered, developed and made more resilient.

## **Community engagement:**

- Comprehensive and robust arrangements for community engagement are in place, which facilitate collaboration and cooperation across the sectors.

## **Promoting social action and volunteering:**

- Residents feel supported and encouraged through social action to have more control over their lives and their communities.
- The voluntary and community sector is stronger, more sustainable and independent.

## **Effective Partnerships:**

- We will be able to measure improved outcomes for residents as a result of greater partnership working and co production between the public sector, the VCS and residents.

## **Self-help, early intervention and prevention:**

- Residents will remain independent in their own homes for longer and there will be a reduction in demand on public services.
- The VCS will have increased capacity to meet these challenges.

## **Investment in local communities:**

- The VCS will be stronger, more sustainable, independent and well supported by volunteers, measured by the State of the Sector report.
- People and communities will have increased digital skills and capabilities.



# Delivering the strategy

**A strategy only comes to life if it is implemented. To make sure this happens, we will ensure that we take responsibility for delivering the strategy through an action plan.**

The action plan will be overseen and monitored by the Warwickshire Third, Public and Private Sector Partnership Group (TAPPSPG) whose objectives are to:

**1.**

Build better relationships between the public, private and third sectors across the county for the benefit of the people of Warwickshire

**2.**

Create a voice and greater influence for the third sector and the communities of interest they support

**3.**

Ensure the public, private and third sectors work in partnership in the strategic development of services that address the changing needs of the community

**4.**

Maximise opportunities to strengthen/build community capacity and resilience and effectively manage demand for services within constrained resources across all sectors

The action plan will be reported upon six monthly to Corporate Board and annually to the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Specific actions will be monitored by Business and Customer Services.



# Outline action plan

## Priority 1: Strengths-Based Working

To embed a new way of working within the Council which harnesses the skills, knowledge, connections and potential of our communities, thereby enabling a culture of innovation and creativity in service delivery

### How will this be achieved

- Develop and promote a Council wide approach to strengths-based working
- Create a community knowledge function that serves to collect, collate and share information about services and activities available to local residents across Warwickshire
- Embed staff behaviours at all tiers of the workforce that enable staff to offer innovative and creative service solutions
- Deliver a community development framework that builds on the skills and capacity within communities to address locally identified priorities

## Priority 2: Promoting Social Action and Volunteering

To create an environment that enables the mobilisation of individuals and communities to respond to locally agreed priorities and strengthen connectivity

### How will this be achieved

- Deliver a countywide programme about the principles of community organising
- Build locally based trusted relationships and networks that support local residents to take action
- Develop and promote volunteering opportunities amongst Council staff and embed a culture of volunteering
- Support the drive to increase volunteering within our VCS organisations
- Support voluntary social action and neighbourliness within local communities through our investment in local community infrastructure
- Encourage more volunteers to consider and develop a social enterprise model
- Work with private sector organisations to maximise corporate social responsibility opportunities and the Inclusive Growth agenda
- Develop time banks and community-led support in neighbourhoods
- Facilitate community led solutions to local issues



### Priority 3: Community Engagement

To facilitate effective and meaningful dialogue between the council, residents and the VCS to ensure appropriate involvement in the design, delivery, ongoing transformation and continuous improvement of public services

#### How will this be achieved

- Develop and apply a WCC Community Engagement framework that:
  - Facilitates collaboration and co-operation around community engagement between the sectors
  - Facilitates cross sector design and delivery of services
  - Implements an effective approach to routine community engagement
- Promote co-production as an approach to the design and delivery of new services
- Through relevant networks and partnerships facilitate the active involvement of the VCS in the design, commissioning and delivery of services
- Through work such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) ensure that opportunities for the involvement of the VCS are maximised
- In supporting elected members in their role as community leaders, involve the VCS where appropriate

### Priority 4: Effective Partnerships

To facilitate collaboration and coordination to maximise the use of resources across the public, private and VCS sectors

#### How will this be achieved

- Support key partnership working such as the JSNA place based assessment steering groups, the Sub Regional Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership, Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership, joint work with Town and Parish Councils via the Local Councils Charter and the Warwickshire Third, Public and Private Sector Partnership Group
- Support the VCS to engage effectively with key partners
- Strengthen the strategic voice and influence of the VCS
- Support greater partnership working and co production between the public sector, private sector, VCS and residents
- Strengthen the engagement and partnerships with the social enterprise sector



### Priority 5: Self-Help, Early Intervention and Prevention

To promote and support community-based models of self-help and early intervention activities that help to build resilience and reduce the demand on public services

#### How will this be achieved

- Evaluate, redesign and re-commission targeted advice and equality services.
- Develop a countywide social prescribing offer ensuring compatibility with the VCS.
- Apply and encourage new models of community-led support including time banking.
- Develop new models of communication, including digital, to enable access to self-help information and improve connections within communities. This includes a refresh of the online community information and advice platform including the Warwickshire Community Directory.
- Target projects around:
  - Financial inclusion
  - Tackling loneliness and social isolation
  - Improving health and wellbeing
  - Improving community cohesion.
- Consider WCC work streams around self-help, early intervention and prevention in the re-commissioning of VCS infrastructure support services

### Priority 6: Investment in Local Communities

To help secure a strong and sustainable VCS in Warwickshire, including the development of digital skills and capabilities within our communities

#### How will this be achieved

- Embed the principles of the Social Value Act in the Council's commissioning processes
- Re-commission infrastructure support services for the VCS
- Continue to deliver community development work in priority neighbourhoods
- Review the effectiveness and impact of community grant schemes to maximise the benefit for grassroots groups
- Active support for the Local Councils Charter promoting joint working between the three tiers of Local Government

