

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Huntingdonshire Place Strategy

Meeting/Date: Scrutiny (Growth & Partnerships) – 1 March 2023
Cabinet – 21 March 2023
Council – 29 March 2023

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader, Chair of the Cabinet and Executive Councillor for Place

Report by: Oliver Morley, Interim Managing Director

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The report seeks endorsement of the shared Place Strategy for Huntingdonshire, known as Huntingdonshire Futures with the recommendation for it to be approved by Council.

Huntingdonshire Futures is a statement of shared aspirations for the future that seeks to improve the lives of all our residents, communities and businesses.

This is the culmination of many months of engagement with residents, partners, elected representatives and other stakeholders to deliver a brighter future for Huntingdonshire via five outcomes; Pride in Place, Environment Innovation, Inclusive Economy, Health Embedded and Travel Transformed.

Huntingdonshire Futures will guide future strategy and policy developments and investment decisions by the Council and partners, enabling more effective delivery of integrated interventions that better serve the current and future needs of residents, communities and businesses.

The adoption of Huntingdonshire Futures is a significant milestone that underlines the Council's commitment to working differently with partners and stakeholders to better deliver our shared ambitions and outcomes, being an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners and influencing the actions of others.

The Council is committed to pro-actively working with partners and stakeholders throughout 2023/24 with an emphasis on embedding partnership working, agreeing short term actions, monitoring progress and how we can learn from what is working well and could be even better.

Recommendation:

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

- Note the extensive engagement and work with partners, stakeholders and residents across Huntingdonshire to develop the shared Place Strategy known as Huntingdonshire Futures.
- Endorse and commit to the outcomes and ambitions set out in Huntingdonshire Futures.
- Recommend to Council the adoption of Huntingdonshire Futures.

Council is RECOMMENDED to:

- adopt the Place Strategy for Huntingdonshire - Huntingdonshire Futures

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks endorsement of the shared Place Strategy for Huntingdonshire, known as Huntingdonshire Futures with the recommendation for it to be approved by Council.
- 1.2 The adoption of Huntingdonshire Futures is a significant milestone that underlines the Council's commitment to:
- Taking a holistic focus to the whole place, not just individual locations or issues.
 - Working differently with partners and stakeholders to better deliver our shared ambitions and outcomes, recognising our different roles, responsibilities and networks.
 - Engaging differently and using resident and stakeholder feedback to inform the development of our own strategies and policies.
 - Being an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners and influencing the actions of others.
 - Continuing pro-active working with partners and stakeholders over the coming months focussing on agreeing short term key actions, monitoring and how we can learn from what is working well and could be even better.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Huntingdonshire is already one of the best places to live in the country, but we want to make sure this is true for future generations too with a greener, fairer future for all. That is why we have developed Huntingdonshire Futures, that will shape not only the future of Huntingdonshire but also the future activities of the Council.
- 2.2 Huntingdonshire Futures has been developed collaboratively using a variety of bespoke engagement techniques along with existing mechanisms. It has also drawn on existing data, intelligence, insight and strategies whilst adopting a fresh approach to challenge current thinking and to take into account future societal, lifestyle and technological advancements and changes.

The **aims** and **benefits** of developing Huntingdonshire Futures are:

- To create a statement of shared aspirations for the future of our place, people, economy and the environment, which improves the lives of all our residents, communities and businesses
- To unite stakeholders through a shared sense of direction
- Reduce duplication of effort and funding across the Council and partners by addressing shared issues and priorities in an integrated and holistic way thus encouraging more effective decision making and use of limited public funds
- To guide future strategy and policy developments and investment decisions by the Council and partners enabling more effective delivery of integrated interventions that better serve the current and future needs of residents, communities and businesses.

3. SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

3.1 Huntingdonshire Futures has been co-created with residents, businesses, partners, utilities providers and public sector bodies setting out their views about the type of place we all want Huntingdonshire to be.

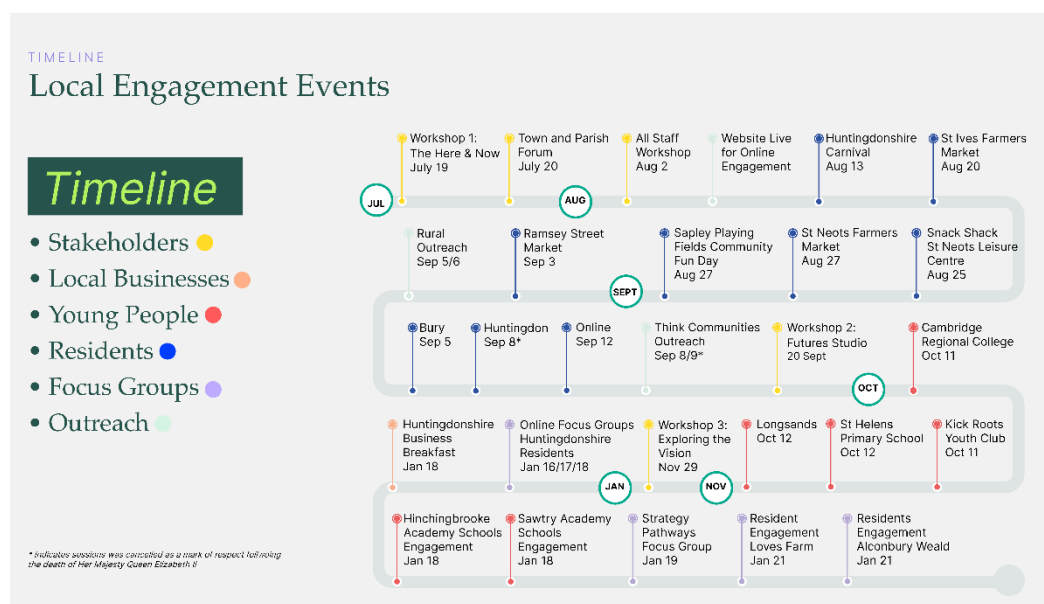
3.2 A broad approach has been used, utilising a range of tools and techniques in order to develop a clear understanding of the current perceptions, strengths and challenges we face as an area as well as identifying where there was consensus and dissonance on different aspects of Huntingdonshire. All of these processes have informed Huntingdonshire Futures which defines the high-level ambitions for Huntingdonshire, articulating our long-term goals.

3.3 Diagram 1 provides a high-level overview of the iterative nature of this engagement which has included:

- Three half day in person stakeholder workshops with representatives from nearly 70 organisations taking place in July, September and November 2022.
- A Town & Parish council in person workshop in July 2022 and online update and feedback sessions on 17th October 2022 and 25th January 2023
- 481 resident conversations were held with residents at one of four pop up exhibitions in locations such as Huntingdon carnival and Ramsey market, attending virtual or physical focus groups, engaging through existing community groups such as Sapley park fun day and conversations in rural community meeting places such as benches in parks in Godmanchester, Hilton, Kimbolton, Sawtry, and Stilton. This initial phase of engagement focused on understanding and exploring what people feel about Huntingdonshire now; their priorities for change around the four key themes of economy, environment, people and community, and place and what if we did things differently.
- During October 2022 there was a particular focus on engaging young people. This engagement was undertaken alongside the Huntingdonshire climate strategy engagement work. 147 children and young people participated in 'what if' engagement exercises through a programme with schools and groups including Kick Root Youth Club, Cambridge Regional College, Longsands Academy and St Helen's School.
- In January 2023 258 residents aged between 11 and 94 years joined listening sessions to which focussed on understanding and exploring how participants thought and felt about the draft place strategy and the role of the community through a combination of online and face to face focus groups including students in Years 7 to 9 at Sawtry Village Academy and Years 7-12 at Hinchingsbrooke Academy, Ghanaian Community Association, 3cs Clon Caring Community and newer residents at Loves Farm and Alconbury Weald.

- A business breakfast workshop in January 2023 with over 30 attendees providing an opportunity to exploring feedback on the draft place strategy and the role of the business community in supporting the delivery.
- Two workshops for hdc members in September 2023 and January 2023 initially exploring opportunities and challenges and then testing the draft strategy.
- Engaging existing partnerships and forums such as the huntingdonshire place board and hunts forum of voluntary organisations.

4. DIAGRAM 1: STAKEHOLDER AND RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPING HUNTINGDONSHIRE FUTURES



4.1 Throughout the entire period, thoughts, ideas and feedback have been gathered online at [Huntingdonshire Futures](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/futures). Social Media has been used to promote opportunities for residents to find a pop-up exhibition, sign up to a focus group or find out what is online and partners received regular sharing of updates on activities and progress via the Place email address Place@huntingdonshire.gov.uk which has acted as a single contact point throughout this process.

4.2 A summary report of stakeholder engagement activity can be found at Appendix 1 along with a report on resident conversations at Appendix 2.

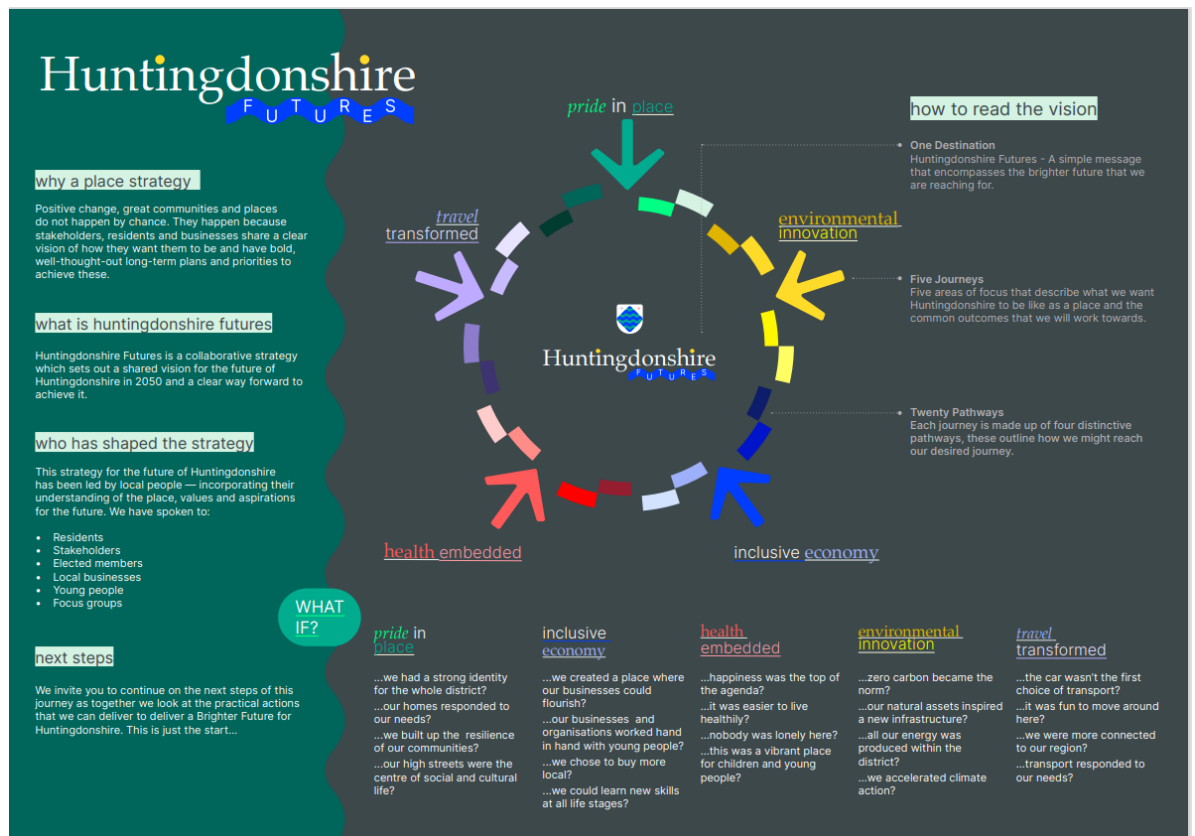
5. KEY ELEMENTS OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE FUTURES

5.1 As a result of feedback received in early 2023 on the Huntingdonshire Futures Key Directions document a number of amendments have been made to Huntingdonshire Futures.

5.2 Huntingdonshire Futures is structured around one **Destination**, five **Journeys** and twenty **Pathways**.

- 5.3 The **Destination** is a simple message that encompasses the brighter future that we are reaching for.
- 5.4 The five **Journeys** underpin the Destination, describing what we want Huntingdonshire to be like as a place and the common outcomes that we want to work towards. The Journeys are:
1. Pride in Place
 2. Environment Innovation
 3. Inclusive Economy
 4. Health Embedded
 5. Travel Transformed
- 5.5 Each Journey is made up of four distinctive **Pathways**, these outline how we might reach our desired journey. There are currently twenty Pathways. Diagram 2 shows how this all fits together.

Diagram 2: Huntingdonshire Futures Overview



- 5.6 An example of one of the Journeys and associated Pathways is shown below. The draft Huntingdonshire Futures Strategy can be found at Appendix 3.

Diagram 3: Journey and Pathway example



6. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 6.1 Progress on the development of the Place Strategy was discussed at Overview and Scrutiny at its meeting on 4th January 2023. All Members were also invited to attend a second workshop on the 31st January 2023 to hear an overview of headline feedback received from stakeholders and residents and to discuss revisions to the Place Strategy presented in this paper.
- 6.2 The Panel discussed the Place Strategy at its meeting on 1st March 2023.
- 6.3 Councillor Gardener expressed concern that engagement had mainly been focused on urban areas of the district so far but was pleased to see that it was planned to consult with rural areas which make up a large proportion of the district. The Panel were reassured that this work was ongoing in rural areas and would continue to be an ongoing dialogue to ensure engagement across the whole of the district.
- 6.4 Following a further question from Councillor Gardener regarding the change in operator for the TING service which has created confusion and loss of confidence amongst residents, the Panel heard that this would be further investigated and reported back.
- 6.5 The Panel were advised, following a question from Councillor Wells regarding the Council taking a more active role in rewilding and biodiversity it's own green spaces and across the district. This point was noted and the Panel were advised that the team would take this away and ensure that commitment is as strong in this document as in other supporting strategies.

- 6.6 Councillor Gray expressed concerns on the detail contained within the Strategy and that it appeared that a lot of detail was still work in progress. The Panel heard that the Strategy is a long term vision but encapsulates feedback received so far, and will continue to adapt as the conversation continues. The Council is facilitating this plan but will work with partners to implement this over the coming years. The Panel were assured that more refinement and detailed actions would follow alongside the implementation of the Corporate Plan. Councillor Gray expressed further concern that some of the Strategy may be aspirations of the coalition but questioned if this was what residents of the district wanted, especially if public funds would be used to implement them. The Panel were assured that engagement with residents would continue to ensure the best interests of both residents and the district.
- 6.7 Councillor Gardener enquired how the Strategy would be updated following the proposed engagement with rural areas later in the year. The Panel heard that whilst there were no further mass rounds of consultation planned, there would be continued engagement alongside the help of all Councillors and the Strategy would be subject to constant reflection alongside an annual review process.
- 6.8 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

7. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 7.1 The biggest risks are maintaining momentum after the intensive period of strategy development, ability to sharpen the focus on action and impacts whilst balancing the need to build on the new approach of partners working together. It would be easier for the Council to push ahead and take forward Huntingdonshire Futures on its own, it is harder and will take longer to work collaboratively to maximise benefits of working together to better deliver agreed outcomes. Mitigations include Huntingdonshire Futures journeys and pathways having been mapped across the Council's new Corporate Plan so the contribution of the Council is clear. The project plan for the next phase will be agreed in quarter 1, 23/24.

8. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 8.1 Workshops, forums and conversations with partners that focus on refining actions, testing new ways of working and progress reporting will take place from quarter 2 onwards in 23/24.
- 8.2 It should be noted that the feedback received during the development of Huntingdonshire Futures has been used to inform the development of the Council's recently adopted Climate Strategy, new Corporate Plan and issues explored in the Local Plan. It will also be used to inform the refresh of the Council's Community Strategy.

9. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 9.1 The delivery of the Place Strategy is a key action within the Council's current 2022/23 Corporate Plan. Feedback received through the development of Huntingdonshire Futures has informed the Council's new three-year Corporate Plan which is also being presented to Council on the 29 March 2023. There is strong alignment between the themes within Huntingdonshire Futures and the Council's new Corporate Plan, with mapping of specific actions and next steps.
- 9.2 Huntingdonshire Futures will directly deliver against the Council's new 23/24 Corporate Plan outcome priorities:
- Priority 1 – Improving quality of life for local people
 - Priority 2 – Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
 - Priority 3 - Deliver good quality, high Value for Money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Please refer paragraphs 3.1 to 3.5 on engagement and consultation activity along with Appendices 1 and 2.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

12. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Council's 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) earmarked £100K to support the implementation of Huntingdonshire Futures, this funding will be used to progress further development work.
- 12.2 The intention is to use Huntingdonshire Futures to inform Council strategies, policies and approach to working differently with partners and residents.

13. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As set out in the Community (Transition) Strategy 2021-23, the Council are committed to supporting residents through a positive and ongoing working relationship with local communities. Tackling health improvements has featured strongly in the Huntingdonshire Futures conversation, resulting in one of the five Journeys focussing on **Health Embedded**. Pathways for action include a focus on happiness, where it is easier to live healthily, where nobody is lonely and the area being a vibrant place for children and young people. Support in these areas will directly contribute to positive health outcomes.

14. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 In December 2021 the Council adopted a core set of environmental principles, the Council are now committed to the development of a new Huntingdonshire Climate Strategy. In October 2022 the Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In February 2023 Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, adopted the Council's Climate Strategy underlining the organisations commitment to:

- Setting a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040
- Acting as an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners
- Acting as an encourager to those that live, work and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions

- 14.2 Within Huntingdonshire Futures one of the five Journeys focuses on **Environmental Innovation**, with pathways for action including zero carbon becoming the norm, our natural assets inspiring new infrastructure, all energy being produced within the district and we accelerated climate action.

15. EQUALITIES

- 15.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 15.2 Good planning and effective regeneration can improve environments and opportunities for communities experiencing disadvantage. Planning which does not adequately engage with or consider the needs of local communities is unlikely to improve their life chances and may further entrench area-based disadvantage.

15.3 The development of Huntingdonshire Futures has deliberately sought to engage a broad range of groups and stakeholders as outlined in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.7.

16. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

16.1 To endorse Huntingdonshire Futures with the recommendation for it to be approved by Council.

17. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

Appendix 2 – Resident Conversations about the future of Huntingdonshire

Appendix 3 – Draft Place Strategy: Huntingdonshire Futures

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Paul Gibbons, Economic Development Officer

Tel No: 01480 388074

Email: Paul.Gibbons@huntingdonshire.gov.uk