

**Public**  
**Key Decision - No**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Celebration of Huntingdonshire, linked to Huntingdonshire Futures

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny (Performance and Growth), 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

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

**Report by:** Neil Sloper, Assistant Director (Strategic Insights & Delivery)

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary**

The report is presenting the outcome of the consultation that was requested at the last Committee meeting.

### **Background**

Huntingdonshire Futures is a statement of shared aspirations for the future that seeks to improve the lives of all our residents, communities, and businesses. The project is bigger than the Council in isolation, sitting separately from the HDC Corporate Plan presenting a strategy for place. The headline ambition of Huntingdonshire Futures is to help transform the culture by encouraging embedded partnership working and to enable our partners to work “differently together”. The project will help shape the future of Huntingdonshire over the next 20-30 years.

Adopted in March 2023, Huntingdonshire Futures was the culmination of many months of engagement with residents, partners, elected representatives and other stakeholders. The Strategy describes a brighter future for Huntingdonshire via five journey themes; Pride in Place, Environment Innovation, Inclusive Economy, Health Embedded and Travel Transformed.

The Council’s own Corporate Plan seeks to ensure the Council works to influence, enable, and contribute to delivering a place with the highest possible quality of life. ‘Working together’ is a key principle for the Council, as the challenges we face can only be solved through working collaboratively and the responsibility is not the Council’s alone. The project to support Huntingdonshire Futures to transition from vision and strategy into actions co-created and co-designed with our partners, stakeholders, businesses, and communities is part of this approach, only by working with people can we make sure Huntingdonshire is

a place where our communities can have a good life taking advantage of all opportunities.

Huntingdonshire Futures aims to guide not only the Council's future strategy, policy developments and investment decisions, but those of our partners. It seeks to enable different ideas and solutions of working together on effective delivery of integrated interventions that better serve the current and future needs of residents, communities, and businesses.

### **The context of this current activity**

Since adoption of the Place Strategy, the project has moved into a staged delivery phase, aimed at delivering Huntingdonshire Futures. Stakeholders have been encouraged to help form steering groups which will lead to action planning and project delivery.

The current project phase is still concentrated on establishing effective steering groups for each journey theme, accompanied by a governance framework, moulded to each steering group's individual needs.

The Council's commitment to pro-actively work with partners and stakeholders throughout 2023/24 has resulted in a step-change of project resourcing, to help support these new ways of working. This Step-change also included the creation of a "Festival of Huntingdonshire" to coincide with Huntingdonshire Day and The Council's 50th Anniversary of creation and the 40th Anniversary of when the Council was named Huntingdonshire District Council. All these landmark dates occur throughout 2024.

The opportunities described underpin the Festival of Huntingdonshire work and provide multiple opportunities for our communities and interested parties to engage by demonstrating their support for Huntingdonshire aligned with the narratives of the project to date.

The Huntingdonshire Futures team has undertaken various engagement as referred to at the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. This includes a Member workshop, two online sessions for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector with 19 total attendees, and an online session with 19 representatives of Town and Parish councils. We have also engaged via the Senior Leadership Team and Informal Cabinet to ensure our proposals are well-informed.

Based on all of the above engagement, we heard three clear messages:

- celebrate people.
- showcase place.
- connect communities.

It was clear there is already considerable activity planned or regularly taking place across our District that encourages communities to come together and which celebrated their place. This has shaped how we are proposing to move forward.

We are proposing a fund of small grants celebrating Huntingdonshire Futures. These would range from £100 - £2000, to support even the smallest of funded activities. We will distribute these aligned with the principles of the Community

Chest fund. To assist, we will also offer some suggestions of the sort of activities groups might wish to offer in their communities – linking to the other Huntingdonshire Future’s journeys and priorities such as loneliness, and pride in place. We would ask that all funded activity is badged with the Huntingdonshire Futures logo and we will promote them accordingly.

Feedback from our engagement highlighted the importance of promoting Huntingdonshire and celebrating the wealth of activities and events already on offer. We heard that finding ways to share these opportunities to join in more widely remains a challenge with no obvious central point to be able to see all that is on offer. This is something that could fit alongside emerging work on the visitor economy and will be explored in more detail as part of the Council’s workstreams for 2024–2025.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to feedback on the proposal of offering small Huntingdonshire Futures grants, taking into account the engagement undertaken and original purpose of Huntingdonshire Futures, which is to enable and influence our communities to create a brighter future for Huntingdonshire. The Panel are invited to help us understand how members could be involved in its successful implementation.