

Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Update on the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy and associated fund

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) Thursday 22nd January 2026

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Sally Howell, Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure

Report by: Claudia Deeth, Public Protection Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the report and:

- 1.0 Continue to monitor the progress being made against the strategy and fund and promote this approach as a way of awarding funding to local groups and organisations.
- 2.0 Follow the progress made and truly understand the value that the funded initiatives are having on our communities by regularly checking the updates available via the dedicated web page.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) was approved by Full Council at their meeting held in December 2024. The strategy aims to improve the quality of life for local people by focussing on three themes:

- To improve physical and mental health via supporting an increase in physical activity.
- To support economic resilience via a focus on employment and skills and barriers to this.
- To support social connection and sense of community.

1.2 The strategy outlines how Huntingdonshire District Council as an organisation will work to deliver against these objectives through the way we work with partners and how we deliver our core business. We embrace the principles of Community Wealth Building, which set out practical ways to ensure that the way public sector organisations operate directly benefits local people. We also acknowledge that the factors that create community wealth also support community health. This will play a key part in supporting the delivery of Huntingdonshire's Futures Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Integrated Care System's requirements to work preventatively to improve health.

1.3 Recognising that the strategy is truly aspirational, a CHAW Fund was also approved to ensure delivery against the objectives set. An initial amount of £750k over 3 years was ringfenced with the intention of being made available to the community and voluntary sector to implement projects and initiatives that tackle the three themes of the strategy.

1.4 There are financial limitations to what any one organisation can do, and we recognise that most people do not understand public sector structures. There are also organisations, public, private and voluntary, that want to help and who welcome a partnership approach to improving their community impact. Often, it is our residents that have the answers and therefore making the CHAW fund available, is enabling a ground up approach to finding sustainable solutions to the things that matter the most.

2.0 PILOT FUND

2.1 Following extensive consultation that included listening to the community and voluntary sector it was agreed that we would make a pilot fund available initially, this being an amount of £50k. Working closely with Support Cambridgeshire, we established a process that would allow eligible groups and organisations to apply for funding in a clear and transparent way whilst also receiving support and guidance where needed.

2.2 The funding is not aimed at big, national charities but grassroots groups that know the district and their communities intimately and can rally

volunteers and embed new ways of working that will last long into the future.

- 2.3 The pilot process for making awards was developed following a series of workshops that delved into the complexities of applying for and securing grant funding. We heard of long application forms, numerous stages and long wait times to determine the outcome, which was often that they had not been successful. This had resulted in many groups being discouraged from applying for funding because their volunteers didn't have the time or were not experts in bid writing, meaning their experiences of many funding opportunities had been negative.

- 2.4 Recognising this and acting upon the information gathered throughout the consultation process, we implemented the following approach to awarding the pilot fund:

Step 1: Submit an Expression of Interest (A short form explaining how much was being applied for, what the funding was for and what were the intended outcomes).

Step 2: Expressions of Interest shortlisted, and chosen applicants invited to complete a Full Application.

Step 3: A multi-agency and resident funding panel created to meet in person and consider the applications submitted.

Step 4: Each application scored by the panel and ranked in order of scoring.

Step 5: Panel agreement on which groups would be awarded funding and to what value.

Step 6: Funding offers made and Conditions of Grant agreed together with the successful applicant.

- 2.5 The pilot fund was opened for Expressions of Interest (EOI) in August with shortlisting taking place at the beginning of September. In total 71 EOI were received with 20 groups being invited to submit a full application. Two workshops were made available for the groups to attend that provided support and guidance on the bid writing process as well as answering any questions.

- 2.6 Of the 20 groups invited to submit a full application, 16 applications were received. The funding panel convened in November and was made up of representatives from:

- Huntingdonshire District Council (Communities)
- Cambridgeshire County Council (Children, Families and Adult Services)
- Integrated Neighbourhood Team, NWAFT
- DWP
- Residents

2.7 All applications were of an exceptional standard but after much consideration, the panel agreed to award funding to:

- Creative Crafters, Ramsey – A volunteer led initiative enabling residents with poor mental and or physical health to showcase and sell their crafts within a community run retail unit on the High Street.
- The MENtor Shed, Yaxley – Working from the Hobby Hub, providing mentoring and confidence building opportunities for young people who are not in education, employment or training.
- Inspire Through Sport, Huntingdon – Working with identified young people from Oxmoor who are at risk of anti-social behaviour or entering the criminal justice system and using sport as a diversionary activity and an opportunity to secure qualifications.
- Centre33, Huntingdonshire – Targeted at adult young carers who are experiencing social isolation and are at risk of low aspiration and following familial patterns of reliant behaviours.
- The Memory Support Group, Ramsey – Supporting residents and their carers who have been affected by memory issues. Tackling social isolation and the feeling of helplessness by creating a network of support fully run by volunteers.

2.8 All projects will commence in January 2026, and their progress will be tracked via the dedicated web page on the District Council's website.

2.9 Following the commissioning of the Social Value Engine, we are now inputting the measures relating to each of the initiatives that will in turn accurately and transparently measure the social return on investment made on each project. This information will be available at agreed stages of the initiatives and will be a tool utilised where other opportunities arise.

3.0 THE CHAWS FUNDING

3.1 The CHAWS funding stream will be officially launched at a celebration event being held at the end of January 2026. Targeted at businesses and partner organisations operating in Huntingdonshire, attendees will hear from the groups that were successful at the pilot stage as well as understand the opportunities available to them to be part of the CHAWS approach and funding model.

3.2 We are welcoming investment from businesses and partner organisations who are committed to tackling issues relating to health, employment and social connection. By investing in the CHAWS approach, we will be able to evidence how their contribution has been spent but more importantly the value that it will have had on those living in Huntingdonshire.

3.3 Learning from the pilot process, we will now amend and re-shape the funding process ahead of the pot re-opening in the new year. But ultimately, the intention is that this is just the start and that through financial investment from others, we will be able to continually 'top up' the funding pot making this a funding model that is tried, tested and sustainable.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Members of the panel read the report and continue to monitor the progress being made against the strategy and fund and promote this approach as a way of awarding funding to local groups and organisations.
- 4.2 Follow the progress made and truly understand the value that the funded initiatives are having on our communities by regularly checking the updates available via the dedicated web page.

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