

Report to: Cranbrook Placemaking Group

Date of Meeting 6th October 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Cranbrook Social Development

Report summary:

This report considers how best to support the social development of Cranbrook as a strong and resilient community. This is at a point where there is a need to reinvigorate the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme. The report highlights the complex, multi-partner landscape in terms of community development and considers the role that the District Council could play moving forward in collaboration with our partners, including the funding and hosting of roles. Finally the potential to develop a civic collaboration agreement is highlighted as a means to foster consensus and to determine how best to proceed.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☐ No ☒

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That the Group;

- Supports re-establishing the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme
- Supports the creation of the Community Wellbeing & Activity Organiser and Community Connector roles
- Notes the current position in relation to potential funding for and hosting of these roles and identifies the preferred way forward
- Supports exploring the development of a civic agreement with key partners to provide a framework to support ongoing community development
- Makes recommendations to EDDC's Cabinet as to how best to support the social development of Cranbrook moving forward

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that strong social foundations are established for the Cranbrook new community alongside its ongoing physical development.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate

- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Medium Impact. The essence of community development is to support the establishment of strong and resilient communities. This necessarily needs to consider how best to meet the needs of diverse groups with key characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment will need to accompany the further report to Cabinet.

If choosing High or Medium level outline the equality considerations here, which should include any particular adverse impact on people with protected characteristics and actions to mitigate these. Link to an equalities impact assessment form using the [equalities form template](#).

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; It is essential that there is a collective commitment to the social development of Cranbrook but the landscape is complex and funding is tight. Subsequently there is a risk that there is no consensus amongst partners which would be to the wider detriment of the community.

Links to background information ([Public Pack](#)) [Agenda Document for Cranbrook Placemaking Group, 09/06/2025 09:30](#) item 10

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services

1. Background and Context

1.1 The vision for Cranbrook is for it to develop as a sustainable new community. Whilst the physical development of this new town continues apace, it is important to consider how this aligns with its social development. There is no set recipe for creating a sense of community but there are key themes around enabling, participation and capacity building. The core idea is that local people are best placed to understand their own needs and can take a leading role in creating positive, lasting change. A co-production approach to service delivery helps to ensure that the community continues to thrive long beyond the limits of the responsibilities of any single organisation.

1.2 The concept of community development extends well beyond the District Council's role as the local planning authority. This also cuts across many different areas, from health and wellbeing to community safety and cohesion, that fall within the scope of multiple different agencies and organisations. Within this complex environment no one organisation has exclusive responsibility for the social development of Cranbrook. It is essential therefore that the key partners, from local authorities and affordable housing and registered providers to education services, the Police and NHS, have a clear and collective understanding of how best to support the development of a strong and resilient community.

1.3 Cranbrook has been the subject of various initiatives to date designed to promote specific aspects of community development. This has included its status as a Healthy New Town, which focused on engraining improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and is currently part of the Sport England Place Partnership with Exeter which focuses on increasing physical activity. But there

are challenges around funding and how best to support a town with a very young demographic profile.

1.4 This report takes stock of how best local partners including the District Council can support the ongoing social development of Cranbrook. It follows a report to the Cranbrook Placemaking Group in June of this year that considered how to progress the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme. Since this point confirmation has also been received that a bid for further lottery funding for the EX5 Alive hub at the Cranbrook Education Campus has been unsuccessful.

2. Cranbrook Place Partnership

2.1 The report to the Cranbrook Placemaking Group, dated 9 June 2025 (see background links), considered the town's involvement in the Sport England Place Partnership programme, which runs until 2028. The first four years of this programme, known as the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot, ran from 2021 to 2025 and had a strand focused on community building and social prescribing, known as Wellbeing Cranbrook.

2.2 The Wellbeing Cranbrook programme was important for the town's residents, providing community development and support. Across its four years it was funded by the Local Delivery Pilot and Devon County Council and the programme ended in March 2025, leaving a void in community cohesion and support. Funding of £76,974 was agreed in March 2024 by EDDC's Cabinet to support the Community Connector, Community Builder and Project Manager posts. This funding has not been drawn down as the conditions attached to it regarding the management of the roles have not been complied with. Subsequently this is currently held as a reserve.

2.3 With the town continuing to grow and the importance of community and physical activity to wellbeing, the reinstatement of the programme, in an updated manner, is considered to be a necessary step for ongoing community support and development. Hence there is a desire to reinstate the programme with practical changes, but this depends on agreeing a funding package.

2.4 The report to the Placemaking Group in June recommended re-establishing the programme and creating two new roles: a Community Wellbeing and Activity Organiser and a Community Connector. Differing hosting options were considered including the District Council, the Town Council, the Ted Wragg Trust, and the EX5 Hub. The report outlines funding options and suggests that the programme should be hosted within the town itself.

2.5 The Group resolved to endorse the re-establishment of the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme for a period of 3 years and the creation of Community Wellbeing & Activity Organiser and Community Connector roles. The Group also endorsed the need for further exploration around the options for the hosting and day-to-day management of proposed Wellbeing Cranbrook roles together with associated funding implications. The intention was that this would then progress to a report to EDDC's Cabinet.

3. Current position

3.1 Subsequent to the June meeting of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group there has been ongoing engagement with key partners and further clarity regarding the relative positions and preferences. This is summarised below;

- There has been ongoing engagement with the NHS. The particular focus of this engagement has been to understand whether there is scope to fund the Community Connector role which is most closely related to social prescribing. This is a requirement placed on Primary Care Networks (PCN) and a follow up meeting is now being planned with the County Council and Outer Exeter PCN to progress this further.

- The Head of Campus at the Cranbrook Education Campus has confirmed that the Ted Wragg Trust would be prepared to host the Community Wellbeing and Activity Organiser role.
- Cranbrook Town Council have considered a report detailing opportunities for enhanced services for young people. It was resolved to support the creation of a full-time youth worker/leader role to be hosted and line-managed by the Town Council, potentially with the aid of the Place Partnership and/or East Devon District Council funding, instead of a continuation/reestablishment of the Community Builder and Community Connector posts. If funding was not forthcoming it was resolved to include a full-time youth worker/leader in the budget pending confirmation of the tax base dated 30 November 2025. It was also confirmed that Town Council would be prepared to host and line manage the potential Community Wellbeing and Activity Organiser post. In addition, there was support for the role of the Community Connector forming part of the NHS and a desire for the Town Council to be represented on the governance for the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme.
- Confirmation has been received from the City Council regarding the balance of available funding through to April 2028. This is as follows;

Move More Cranbrook 2025 - 2028	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Programme Management	20000	15000	10000	45000
Move More Cranbrook priorities	20000	15000	10000	45000
Connecting Communities	30000	20000	10000	60000
Cranbrook Active Travel	15000	10000	5000	30000
Total 25-28 (new)	85000	60000	35000	180000
<u>2024/25 Underspend</u>				
Wellbeing Cranbrook Staffing				6545
Move More Cranbrook / Wellbeing Cranbrook Delivery				11417
Total 24/25 (old)				17962
OVERALL TOTAL				197962

This budget is to deliver against Sport England Place Partnership Outcomes by 31st March 2028. There is also an outstanding invoice for £50k from 2024/25 year which relates to the £76,974 figure referenced in para 2.2.

- It has also been confirmed that a bid for further funding from the National Lottery to support the operation of the EX5 Alive Community Hub was unsuccessful and currently there is no funding beyond November 2025 to support its operation.

3.2 These updates help to demonstrate the complex, multi partner environment in terms of community development. The challenges facing the District Council around setting a balanced budget in the context of the Fairer Funding Review should also not be underestimated which is part of the wider landscape in terms of constrained public finances. Coupled with this is the backdrop of the local government reorganisation with new unitary councils expected to be constituted in April 2028. It is expected that the District Council's financial decision making autonomy will be limited at least a year in advance of this.

4. Assessment

4.1 It is essential that strong social foundations are created alongside the physical development of Cranbrook in order to achieve the vision for a vibrant new community. There are several key strands of activity currently as follows;

- Health and wellbeing – focusing on prevention and the determinants of good health including social prescribing.
- Promoting physical activity – this is a particular focus of the Sport England Place Partnership programme and is closely related to achieving improved health outcomes.
- Community safety and cohesion – including meeting the needs of specific groups in the community alongside fostering a sense of collective identity

This activity is all within the context of the particularly young demographic of the town.

4.2 It is important to consider the District Council's role and responsibilities in relation to community development in Cranbrook. Our Public Health strategy is a key document that pulls together a number of different services in our wider community offer but the statutory responsibility for delivery lies primarily with the County Council. The Anti-Poverty Strategy is also directly relevant. This aims to address the various factors contributing to financial hardship within the district. The Council works to help residents on low incomes build financial resilience and reduce debt. This includes having a dedicated Financial Resilience Team that provides direct support, advice, and assistance to individuals. The strategy also recognises that poverty is a complex issue and that the Council must collaborate with other organisations including the County Council, the NHS, and local voluntary groups. This partnership approach ensures a coordinated response and helps to leverage resources effectively.

4.3 The District Council also has responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and community resilience. But, unlike the other main towns, the Council does not have significant Council housing stock in Cranbrook (until recently there was no Council housing, with four properties now acquired under the Afghan resettlement scheme). In other places community development activity is usually channelled through our housing function including through dedicated community development workers. Given that the vast majority of the social housing stock at Cranbrook is controlled by two housing associations, the same rationale does not apply.

4.4 The District Council's role in relation to community development in Cranbrook is neither exclusive nor all-encompassing. Indeed, many of the statutory responsibilities for community services fall to the County Council and NHS family of organisations. Nevertheless, there is an imperative for all partners to work collaboratively to ensure the best outcomes for the community.

5. Options

5.1 The options for how to proceed revolve around two principal considerations – the provision of funding and the hosting of roles. These are considered in turn below;

Funding options;

1. Do nothing – this would essentially mean taking back the residual funding reserved for the roles as a budget saving.
2. Utilise the reserve and the balance of the Move More Cranbrook budget – this would combine the reserved funding (allowing for the outstanding invoice) and the balance of the Programme Management and Connecting Communities elements of the Move More Cranbrook budget. In conjunction with the underspend from 2024/25 this gives a combined total of £138,519 that is available through to the end of March 2028. This is calculated as follows;

Programme Management	£45,000
Connecting Communities	£60,000

Reserve	£76,974
Staffing underspend from 2024/25	£6,545
Total	£188,519
Outstanding invoice	-£50,000
OVERALL TOTAL	£138,519

3. Do more – this would require making additional funding available, ideally to match fund or lever contributions from other partners, in order to provide longer term security around the provision of the roles

5.2 At present the position of key partners, including the PCN and DCC, remains unclear. In the current constrained environment there is a risk that, if the District Council were to commit additional funding, this would simply fill the gap left by others and would be at the potential detriment to wider service delivery in the District. Equally if the first option were pursued this could lead to a saving but would be the detriment of the ability to provide these roles in the town. The second option therefore presents a potential middle way. This would require reprofiling the available funding.

5.3 The second consideration relates to the hosting of the roles with the following options being available;

1. District Council – the Council does employ community development workers already but only through the housing service with a subsequent focus on supporting our tenants.
2. Town Council – this would have the advantage of being rooted in the community and provides the potential for longer term security of employment.
3. Ted Wragg Trust – this would mean hosting the roles through the Cranbrook Education Campus, again providing a strong local connection.
4. EX5 Alive Hub – this is run as part of a community interest company which is based at the Education Campus but is not part of the Ted Wragg Trust. There is no currently no certainty of funding beyond November.

5.4 The ability for the roles to be hosted and managed within the community is a key advantage to the roles not being hosted by the District Council. Both the Town Council and Ted Wragg Trust have demonstrated a willingness to host the Community Wellbeing & Activity Organiser role. But there is currently no consensus amongst local partners as to a single preferred option.

5.5 The prospect of developing a civic collaboration model has been suggested by the EX5 Alive Hub manager as a means of providing ongoing support to the Hub beyond the end point of current funding (expected to be November). This is a framework that brings together diverse individuals, groups, and organisations within a community to collectively identify issues, brainstorm solutions, and implement actions that improve the overall well-being of that community. In essence, a civic collaboration model recognises that community development is not a task for a single entity but a collective endeavour that thrives on the active engagement and partnership of all community members. This provides a potential avenue to help foster consensus and agreement as to how best to proceed which is not necessarily limited to the Hub itself.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This report takes stock of the current position in relation to community development activity in Cranbrook. Whilst the prompt for this has been the need to consider the progression of the Place Partnership and to reactivate the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme, there are wider considerations

around the framework for community development in the town. A further report will need to be considered by EDDC's Cabinet with specific recommendations around the funding and hosting of roles, not least to ensure that conditions applied to previous funding are complied with. This will need to be informed by a more detailed options appraisal which can draw on the feedback and input from the Group.

Financial implications:

The report is not making a recommendation on a preferred option at this stage with a further report to be produced with further analysis undertaken and specific recommendations to be presented to cabinet at a later stage. On this basis there are no financial implications unless members decide a different course of action at the meeting.

Legal implications:

It is essential that any conditions attached to previous funding are complied with in any proposals moving forward. The legal implications moving forward will ultimately depend upon where the funds are hosted and further advice will be given at that stage.