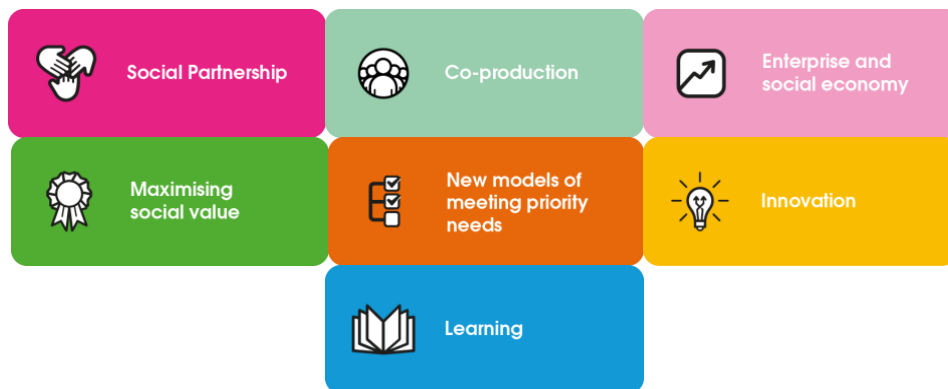


COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Stevenage Borough Council

A Co-operative Approach to Social Inclusion in Stevenage

Since September 2018, Stevenage Borough Council, in collaboration with partners throughout Hertfordshire, have been working collaboratively through the Hertfordshire Growth Board, an alliance consisting of the Leaders of all the Local Authorities and the Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

In November 2021, Stevenage Borough Council, on behalf of the Community Wealth Building Pilot Group, was awarded Community Renewal Funding via the Hertfordshire LEP to pilot various CWB approaches. As part of this, each district and borough council were encouraged to build a bespoke approach that best addressed key local challenges rather than a more rigid county-wide approach.

In Stevenage, a key focus of our project has been on the development of our Social Inclusion Partnership. This is a group of key local VCSE organisations who are committed to working together to tackle social exclusion and augment the support structures that are in place throughout the town through co-operation between local agencies, information sharing, promoting good practice and developing practical responses to community needs.

Funding was used to bolster the capacity and capabilities of the group, with a focus on four key areas:

- A joint research project to determine the impact of the increasing cost of living and breadline gap on Stevenage residents.
- Raising awareness of services and support in Stevenage. Identifying how services are found and how reach may be increased.
- Workforce support for VCSE volunteers, leaders and managers Identify need and ideal outcomes.
- Formalisation of the partnership into a Multi-stakeholder Co-operative to create a unified voice and mechanism for drawing in partnership funding and resource.

The project finalised delivery in December 2022 with the partnership successfully achieving:

- 17 organisations provided with grants, support and given opportunities for knowledge sharing.
- 10 organisations supported with funding to deliver Warm Spaces throughout the Autumn and Winter in response to the Cost of Living Crisis.
- 67 individuals receiving training and life skills support.
- Feasibility studies produced around Cost of Living Impact and the breadline gap.
- Process of Multi-stakeholder Co-operative formalisation begun with a view for this to complete in 2023 working directly with a Hertfordshire-based business support organisation.

This work will continue to feed into the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network, specifically through ongoing participation in the Co-operative Options Training and Supporting Community Projects to become Co-operatives Policy Labs.

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