
Co-Production Framework for West Berkshire

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	3 November 2022
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Graham Bridgman
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	18 August 2022
Report Author:	Sam Shepherd, Programme Manager, Local Communities
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4263

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise work carried out to develop an approach to working co-productively in West Berkshire.
- 1.2 The report proposes a summary document for agreement called “Working Together: Co-Production in West Berkshire: The Essentials” (in Appendix A). The attached document is supplemented by a co-production toolkit for West Berkshire; including a ‘how to’ guide and practical tools, templates and training materials which together constitute a Co-Production Framework for West Berkshire.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Executive agree the document in Appendix A “Working Together: Co-Production in West Berkshire: The Essentials” which summarises the local Co-Production Framework.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>It is anticipated that the Co-Production Framework, summarised by the document in Appendix A will be delivered on a project-by-project basis by relevant Teams. This would be within existing resources.</p> <p>Co-Production has been developed with citizens who have volunteered their time. Further work is being undertaken to explore the possibility of paying expenses or allowances to participants of co-production. If appropriate, any approach to</p>

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	expenses would supplement the Framework developed to date.			
Human Resource:	A number of Council officers who already carry out some elements of community engagement as part of their role have been trained as trainers in co-productive approaches. It is anticipated that the Framework which is summarised in Appendix A will be rolled out by those officers already trained. Delivery will therefore be by Teams across the Council, within their existing resources.			
Legal:	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.			
Risk Management:	The key risk arising from this report is the staffing resource and capacity to use co-productive approaches in relevant projects as co-production takes longer than making decisions without citizen involvement. Linked to this is buy-in to the process of citizen involvement to allow time and resourcing in projects to undertake co-production effectively.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.			
Policy:	There are no national policies which relate to this report or its proposals.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:	X			
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The proposals outlined in this report will have a positive impact on inequalities, as it seeks to drive greater inclusion across communities.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The proposals outlined in this report will have a positive impact on inequalities, as it seeks to drive greater inclusion across communities.

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Environmental Impact:		X		There are no direct environmental implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Health Impact:	X			The proposals outlined in this report will help improve engagement with our communities, which in turn helps deliver the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy which seeks to deliver on all aspects of improved health and wellbeing.
ICT Impact:		X		There are no IT implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Digital Services Impact:		X		There are no direct digital implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<p>The proposals in this report will help to improve the following Council strategy priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships • Support everyone to reach their potential <p>The proposals outlined in this report directly deliver an action in the Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023.</p>
Core Business:	X			The proposals outlined in this report will support stronger relationships between the Council and those we serve.
Data Impact:			X	There are no direct data or data protection implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>This report and the attached Co-Production Framework has been shaped by working co-productively with a Steering Group of local citizens, a lead Councillor and Council officers.</p> <p>The Framework, summarised in Appendix A has itself therefore been co-produced. The content within it has been tested with a wider group of citizens, council officers, Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 It is commonly said that “we are better together”. Through the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen the enormous strength that exists when public services, residents and communities come together. We recognise we don’t always have the answers and that not only do local people know what is needed within our services and communities; by working and taking action together, we can achieve great things.
- 4.2 The DRAFT West Berkshire Co-Production Framework is summarised in Appendix A has been co-produced with local citizens to set out how we will bring together residents as equal partners with Councillors and council officers in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.
- 4.3 Our Co-Production Framework forms part of the Council’s wider commitment to improving our communications, engaging communities and including people in the decisions that affect their lives through the “Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023”. It is also an approach supported by the Care Act 2014 which encourages co-production for service users and carers to influence the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered.
- 4.4 We have tested the Co-Production Framework in environment services, working towards a co-produced guide on community energy projects. It is anticipated that co-production will next be applied in the development of Library services, Public Health, Adult Social Care and Care Leavers services and the report outlines how we will assess which projects we apply co-production to.
- 4.5 This report describes the process we have undertaken to produce the DRAFT Framework summarised in Appendix A. The Framework describes our locally determined definition of co-production, principles, aims and outcomes. It is supported by further documents and materials which complete the Framework; these are a training manual, training slides and a co-production toolkit which helps guide anyone in West Berkshire get the information and materials they need to undertake co-production.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 A key action within Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy (2020-2023) was to "co-design, deliver and agree a framework which embeds community co-production as a way of working". This was aimed at empowering communities by supporting community life, social connections and the development of locally-determined solutions to local challenges.
- 5.2 Since March 2022, we have had some expert support to help us work alongside West Berkshire citizens to:
- Establish a Co-Production Steering Group for West Berkshire, made up of local citizens, lead Councillor and Council officers to develop a Co-production Framework.
 - Develop a Co-Produced Framework which outlines a vision, aims, objectives, outcomes and approach to co-production in West Berkshire.
 - Develop a best-practice co-production toolkit for West Berkshire (including a 'how to' guide and practical tools, so staff and people with lived experience feel supported to co-produce).
 - Develop a training package and deliver a train-the-trainer approach to embed skills and expertise in co-production across the Council.
- 5.3 The culmination of this co-produced piece of work is a Framework which seeks to offer increased engagement for those using Council services, families, carers, residents and communities over the decisions and services that affect their lives.

Benefits of co-production

- 5.4 By adopting co-production, we seek to better connect citizens with public services, to build a greater sense of self-determination and self-resilience. Community life and social connections are all factors that make a vital contribution to people's health and wellbeing. These aspects of community build a sense of resilience and can help buffer against disease and reduce inequalities; this is often referred to as social capital¹.
- 5.5 The following outlines the benefits we are seeking with co-production:

¹ What Makes Us Healthy (2012) <http://www.assetbasedconsulting.co.uk/uploads/publications/WMUH.pdf>

Citizens

- Greater influence over the decisions and services that affect their lives
- Increased levels of self-confidence and self-resilience as skills and experience are valued
- Benefits gained from new peer networks; giving support and a new sense of purpose
- Feel better connected to Council staff that support residents and communities
- Have a greater understanding of the Council and fellow residents
- Better positioned to help deliver shared aims
- Improved health and wellbeing and reduced inequalities as citizens feel more empowered to act

Councillors and Council officers

- Have a more detailed insights into the residents and communities they serve
- Have collaborative relationships with residents and communities
- Have confidence they understand and are responding to the needs of everyone in the community
- Staff motivation increases as they feel connected to residents and communities
- Services are more responsive and innovative; based on strengths within the community

Voluntary and Community partners

- Have a greater influence over the decisions of service providers
- Have greater support for the priorities and solutions they themselves have identified
- Have greater levels of understanding of the Council
- Better positioned to help deliver shared aims

Strategic direction

5.6 Before work commenced on detailed development of local co-production, discussions were had amongst officers and Councillors to ensure there was a shared understanding of co-production, that we explored the opportunities and challenges which co-production may pose and to test aspirations for co-production in West Berkshire. Feedback included the following:

Opportunities with co-production for West Berkshire

- The timing for co-production is right; the Council has built relationships with communities throughout the Covid pandemic.
- Different services could benefit from co-production in different ways e.g. where we have statutory services for defined groups residents (such as social care) and where we more deliver services for the wider community (such as environmental services). A flexible approach will be needed to make co-production appropriate to the services and projects using it.

Challenges with co-production for West Berkshire

- Co-production will take longer than traditional processes. It may also be challenging as different views are captured throughout the process.
- Co-production is new to West Berkshire so there will need to be good communication about what it is and the benefits of being involved; it will need to demonstrate tangible outcomes.

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- Depending on each project circumstance; we will need to ensure we are clear about the expectations for people involved in co-production. We need to be mindful of the capacity of people to be involved. We will need to build trust, respect and shared goals through each co-produced project. We need everyone to be empowered to make decisions.

Success and ambition

- Success will be different for each project and for each stakeholder and it may have many forms e.g. better communication and engagement.
- Co-production will be a success if it becomes the 'norm' of how we work and when residents proactively report they are influencing what is happening on the ground.
- We will need to start small and learn from experience; then move from service to service/project to project. We know that some legal/statutory requirements will constrain which services and projects we co-produce. We will need to assess whether co-production should apply in each circumstance.

5.7 The above feedback was used to shape the direction we have taken as we co-produced a framework for West Berkshire.

Co-producing the Framework

5.8 To ensure we had a robust and best-practice approach to co-production, we secured some expert assistance through the appointment of 'Co-Production Works'. With the guidance of Co-Production Works, we advertised for participants, received applications, evaluated and appointed a Co-Production Steering Group for West Berkshire. The Group was made up of local citizens, a lead Councillor and Council officers. From March to August 2022 the Steering Group met six times, during which it:

- Developed a definition, principles, aims and outcomes for co-production in West Berkshire.
- Developed a training package and delivered a train-the-trainer approach to embed skills and expertise in co-production across the Council.
- Developed a best-practice co-production toolkit for West Berkshire (including a 'how to' guide and practical tools, so staff and people with lived experience feel supported to co-produce).

5.9 The Steering Group also initiated a sub-group to use the approach in environmental services. The subject and focus of the sub-group was co-produced and given the need to be realistic about time constraints, the project was agreed to be:

To produce an introductory guidance, note which could be provided to town and parish councils or other community groups who are considering a community energy project.

5.10 The sub-group work is ongoing and will conclude early November 2022.

Testing the Framework

- 5.11 To test the co-production framework with a wider audience, residents from our Community Panel and officers across the Council took part in an online feedback event. This was undertaken in July 2022 to both validate the direction of travel and gather feedback on the emerging approach.
- 5.12 Three more testing events have been held; one with local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) representatives, one with Town and Parish Councils and one with West Berkshire Council Councillors.
- 5.13 Feedback from the testing events have been reflected in the document attached in Appendix A and fuller details of this feedback can be seen in Appendix B.

Embedding co-production

- 5.14 To start embedding co-production in the Council, Co-Production Works worked to develop a 'train-the-trainer' programme alongside our Steering Group members; some of whom brought previous training expertise to the process.
- 5.15 A train-the-trainer event was held in July 2022, with nine staff successfully completing the training. The staff involved were nominated on the basis that they have community engagement as a part of their role; either now or in the future. Feedback from the event was very positive and a peer support group across the Council has now been formed to support staff as they train others in co-productive approaches.
- 5.16 Alongside the Co-Production Framework summarised in Appendix A, materials have been developed to accompany the Framework and support delivery of co-production across the Council. There is a trainer's manual, slides, resources and the information required to conduct training for any co-productive project.
- 5.17 A further supplement to the Framework is a best-practice co-production toolkit for West Berkshire; including a 'how to' guide and practical tools, so staff and people with lived experience feel supported to co-produce. This toolkit forms an important part of the overall Framework; it includes, guidance on setting outcomes and the measurement co-production a self-reflection tool, templates (such as Steering Group Terms of Reference) and other how-to guidance and practical tools. Once the Framework is agreed, these will all be made available on the intranet and online.

Decision to co-produce

- 5.18 We will look to apply co-production where there is real opportunity to create an equal partnership with citizens. Every co-production experience will offer constraints, opportunities and lessons to learn; this means our approach to co-production is likely to evolve as we implement our approach. In assessing whether co-production should apply in a specific circumstance, projects need to meet the following criteria:
1. The project is at an early stage and so contains opportunity for co-production (i.e. not all decisions have been taken about the shape of the project)
 2. Staff capacity exists to support the co-production process. Support will be offered (from the BCT Team) but staff time will be needed to receive co-production training

and to then facilitate the process (e.g. recruiting citizens, setting up and running meetings).

3. Time for co-production can be built into the project timescale.
4. There is an appetite among residents and/or stakeholders to get involved.
5. The project aligns with the priorities within the [Council's Strategy](#).
6. There is support for co-production in the project by the Head of Service and Portfolio Holder.

5.19 It is anticipated that co-production will next be applied in the development of Library services, Public Health, Adult Social Care and Care Leavers services, with projects assessed against the above criteria.

5.20 The outcomes of each co-produced project will be captured, along with any lessons-learned so we can understand how best to apply co-production in the future.

Involvement expenses

5.21 Remunerating citizens who participate in co-production is considered good practice. Co-production has been developed locally with citizens who have volunteered their time. We are exploring the possibility of paying expenses to participants of co-production to reflect the principle of equality and to demonstrate the value of citizen involvement. If appropriate, any approach to expenses would supplement the attached Framework.

6 Delivery and next steps

6.1 Work will conclude by the sub-group on environmental services early in November, with the production of a guide to help those interested in community energy projects get started. Any learning from this process will also be incorporated in documents which support the Co-Production Framework.

6.2 To roll out and embed co-production, training will be delivered to staff where necessary. A peer group of co-production trainers has been formed and a member of staff has been identified who can coordinate, support and offer assurance on co-production as it rolls out on a project-by-project basis across the Council.

7 Conclusion

7.1 As part of a commitment to improving our communications and engagement, the West Berkshire Co-Production Framework has been co-produced with local citizens. It sets out how we will bring together residents as equal partners with Councillors and council officers in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

7.2 The approach can be flexed to any appropriate situation or project. Training, support, resources and materials are being made available to ensure roll-out of co-production across the Council where a co-productive approach can be taken.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – DRAFT of Working Together: Co-Production in West Berkshire: The Essentials.

8.2 Appendix B- Feedback from Co-Production Testing Events.

Background Papers:

[Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023](#) (approved at Executive, October 2020)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

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