

## Appendix 8

25 August 2021

**From:** Community Conversations [mailto:[communityconversations@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityconversations@warwickshire.gov.uk)]

**Sent:** 04 August 2021 12:38

**Subject:** Keeping the spirit alive - Community Powered Warwickshire Conference

Dear Colleagues

### **KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE – COMMUNITY POWERED WARWICKSHIRE CONFERENCE**

The Coronavirus pandemic has been an incredibly challenging time, which has resulted in some enduring and significant changes to the way we all live and work. One of the biggest changes has been around the role of our communities in response and recovery.

Keeping the spirit of that community action alive is so vitally important as we emerge and recover from the pandemic. With this in mind, we want to invite your organisation to participate in a major county-wide conference in October 2021, to apply the learning from COVID and create conditions in which strong community action can continue to thrive.

Before COVID, Warwickshire had always enjoyed a thriving, vibrant voluntary and community sector, with an estimated annual economic value of around £89million.

During COVID, Warwickshire's incredible communities, whether of place, faith, or other interest, have played a vital role, with the grass roots response crucial to our collective efforts across the county to successfully support vulnerable people and support our progress towards recovery.

Just one example of this was the establishment within days of the start of the pandemic of nearly 300 local mutual aid and COVID support groups across Warwickshire. We have also seen networks of public, voluntary and community, and private sector organisations come together to support our Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents, community testing, the incredibly successful vaccination programme, and so much more besides. There has been huge community interest, and innovation, through the first round of our countywide 'Green Shoots' climate change grant scheme and we know that other partner led community initiatives are gaining similar interest and traction.

Now feels to be the right time to capitalise on this. Having experienced volumes of community action never seen before in peacetime, there is an imperative for organisations from across the sectors to work together to keep this spirit alive, creating even more favourable conditions in Warwickshire for successful community action, building stronger, sustainable, and more equal places and communities, and ultimately enabling people to lead happier and healthier lives.

The conference, which will include voluntary and community sector organisations, businesses, and public services, will provide a golden opportunity to reflect on the last 18 months, to share learning and identify opportunities to build on the lessons we've learnt, and to discuss the actions required to make the most of the unique opportunity to continue to build and strengthen our diverse communities.

The conference and the thinking behind it link strongly to key challenges of the present day including responding to and reducing climate change, pressures on health and social care, mental health and wellbeing, creating and sustaining a vibrant economy, and giving our children and young people the best possible start in life.

The details of the conference are being firmed up and will be shared across a variety of media over the coming weeks. We intend to co-produce the agenda with interested organisations to maximise the

impact across public services, our partnerships, and key initiatives such as the creation of the new Integrated Care System. We have discussed the conference with the Chair of the new Warwickshire Thriving Communities Partnership who is fully supportive of the event.

We have invited our partner, New Local, to facilitate the conference and share its deep insight into community power and best practice from around the UK and internationally. As part of co-producing the conference, New Local will facilitate some preparatory workshops in September.

We really hope that your organisation will be able to participate in the conference, and beyond that to be a part of the wider coalition we're building to keep Warwickshire's thriving community spirit alive, developing strong, happy, healthy, and sustainable communities.

So that we can provide you with details of the conference when these are finalised, we would be grateful if you could please nominate a contact person in your organisation and send their details to [communityconversations@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityconversations@warwickshire.gov.uk) by 18 August.