

Notes of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Social Inclusion Working Group
28th September 2015

Present: Councillors: David Skipp (Chairman) Alan Britten, Roger Clarke, David Coldwell, Matthew French, Ben Staines

Apologies: Councillor: Tim Lloyd, Tricia Youtan

Also present: Councillor: Leonard Crosbie, Godfrey Newman

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1. **TO APPROVE AS CORRECT THE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH JUNE 2015**

The minutes of 15th June 2015 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5. **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM CHAIRMAN OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

6. **TO RECEIVE THE RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET MEMBERS TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN MARCH 2015**

The Working Group had made a number of recommendations in its report in March 2015 on the review of the effectiveness of the provision for local residents suffering financial hardship. The recommendations had been received by the Cabinet Members and replies were provided at the meeting.

The Chairman talked the Working Group through the replies and highlighted the following:

Recommendation one: To review the impact of the decision to disband the Horsham District Community Partnership. The Members noted that feedback would be available in September 2015; this would be followed up and reported back to the Group.

Recommendation two: That the Health and Wellbeing pages were to be updated. Members noted that additional information was available on the Council's website in the form of a leaflet and the Community Development and Engagement Manager would circulate the link to the online version.

Recommendation three: To request that the autumn edition of the Horsham District News magazine include an article detailing organisations which provide advice and assistance. Members noted that this was in progress and an update would be provided.

Recommendation four: Request that a room be made available in Parkside for a regular 'surgery'. The Working Group noted that although a room could easily be provided for a surgery, the difficulty would be in getting the resources to support this service. Much of the information which the Group suggested should be available at the surgery was already available online. The Citizens Advice Bureau also provided a one to one service which sign posted residents to where they could find help and support depending on their needs. . Members noted that a lot of positive work was currently underway but Members were keen to encourage relevant agencies to work together.

Recommendation five: Request that West Sussex County Council promote financial management. The Working Group noted that the Community Development and Engagement Manager would contact WSCC for some feedback on this.

Recommendation six: Request the Finance and Performance Working Group to continue to monitor the performance data for the CenSus Revenues and Benefits service. The Working Group noted that these statistics were being monitored and requested that they passed on to this Group.

The Working Group noted the replies and would await updates on the information requested.

7. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT ON DIGITAL INCLUSION BY THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

The Community Development and Engagement Manager presented the report on Digital Inclusion, arising from the Working Group's previous recommendation to consider the provision of the Council's online communications and services for local residents who do not have access to the internet.

The Working Group discussed the report and noted the recommendations made. The Community Development and Engagement Manager was proposing to write a Digital Inclusion Strategy which outlined the Council's commitment to ensuring that residents in the District could access the online services provided by the Council, which would also include an action plan which could be monitored by the Working Group on an annual basis.

The Members supported the need to address digital inclusion going forward.

The Community Development and Engagement Manager would also communicate with the local housing associations to identify which services they currently offered to their tenants and whether they would consider implementing services such as free wi-fi for better digital inclusion.

The Working Group noted that some work had been carried out in the past in relation to offering free wi-fi in Horsham town centre, further information would be sought in relation to this and an update on the current position would be provided.

It was also suggested that the Council should ensure that the website and online forms were also mobile phone friendly, as this was a popular way to access the internet.

Other key points were education and teaching and contact points for residents to use when they need help.

The Working Group was also concerned about the impending shift to Universal Credit and how people would be able to access this in the future.

Members requested further information on the current digital schemes offered for residents of the District by the District Council, West Sussex County Council, central government and other agencies such as Age UK. Members asked to see this information detailed in a chart with the name of the agency against the services provided. This information would be provided by the Community Development and Engagement Manager.

Members noted that the Council needed to work to empower individuals to have the ability to get online and as the population became more digitally proficient, the Council needed to ensure that services were still made available for those who could not access the internet, i.e. by providing a telephone number.

The Working Group concluded that it would like the Community Development and Engagement Manager to produce an action plan on the Digital Inclusion Strategy for the Group's next meeting, including the details of the current services offered so that the Group could discuss this in further detail.

The meeting finished at 6.35pm having commenced at 5.30pm.

CHAIRMAN