

Community Matters Policy Development Advisory Group
19 JULY 2022

Present: Councillors: Liz Kitchen (Chairman), Colin Minto, Kate Rowbottom, Jack Saheid, Ian Stannard, Claire Vickers and Belinda Walters

Apologies: Councillors: Andrew Baldwin, Chris Brown, Billy Greening and Sam Raby

Absent: Councillors:

Also Present: Gordon Lindsay

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 25 January were approved as a true record.

2 **OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUPPORT SERVICES.**

The principal item for the meeting was an extended overview of Community Development and Voluntary Sector Support Services, delivered by the Head of Housing & Community Services, and the Community Services Manager.

The meeting received a detailed overview of the range of services and activities encompassed within this area. It was noted that the focus is changing from direct provision towards enabling and supporting organisations to get involved and take initiative.

Principle areas of Service delivery covered in the presentation were:

- **Youth Provision.** Significant elements of provision are addressing mental health issues among young people, including drop-in and early intervention activity outside the school setting. An I-Rock drop-in is due to open soon in Hurst Road. Activities based around music, boxing and other physical activity are also being delivered throughout the district. The Service also facilitates the Youth Forum.
- **Strategic Grants & Funding.** In the previous year around £320k of grant funding was awarded to a wide range of organisations, including Age UK, Purple Bus, Homestart and Community Transport. Smaller grants are also available for Community Projects. It is anticipated that demand for this will grow and further funding is being sought.
- **Social Prescribing.** The service is not involved in direct health provision but is strongly focussed on community health. Around 20% of people attending GP surgeries are not in need of clinical help and benefit more from social interventions. Befriending programmes and one-to-one support are being delivered.

- **Community Partnerships.** There are currently 7 active in the District and the service provides each with a maintenance grant of £500 and access to a biddable £1000 project fund.
- **Covid 19 Community Hubs & Vaccination Hubs.** These have proved to a powerful demonstration of communities themselves taking the initiative. The service has support 27 hubs with helping to identify volunteers (up to 130 active at one point), deliveries and other enabling activities. Over the vaccination period in excess of 100k jabs were delivered, making Horsham one of the most effective sites in the South East.
- **Refugee Support.** Continuing support to Afghan and Syrian refugees has been supplemented with the needs of Ukrainians arriving in the District. Whilst Government funding, distributed by West Sussex CC, provides the bulk of financing needed, this is a resource intense service, with almost a full FTE required to manage support.
- **Cost of Living crisis.** The need for advice and help in response to increasingly hard financial constraints at an individual and household level is a major growing area of demand. £300k has been allocated for this, with £100k discretionary housing support, £25k hardship fund, £16k to CAB and £80K for intervention activities with young people. Training for workers and partners is also being provided, particularly in relation to young people's support and behaviour management, and family support.
- **Safeguarding.** The team provides best practice advice, current awareness and support to all parts of HDC and act as a point of referral in the event that safeguarding concerns arise though other service delivery, with liaison and interaction with other agencies as needed.
- **Community Transport.** The issue of social isolation, particularly in rural areas of the District, is an important, but often unrecognised issue. Grant funding to Community Partnership, often in partnership with other local authority area, ensures this key service continues to address this issue.
- **Older Persons Services.** The Service works extensively with Age UK, which is shifting its emphasis away from fixed day centre provision to more peripatetic local delivery through village agents, more rural outlets and home visiting. Charities working with older people are faced with a significant problem with volunteer recruitment, who have been typically older people themselves but are no longer as active post-Covid. The CAB, for instance reports an 80% decline in active volunteers.
- **Partnerships and Pilot Projects.** The team act as a point of contact and advice for potential new community partnership initiatives, advising on suitable contacts and clarifying existing activity.
- **Horsham District Community Lottery.** This has been established for around three years but take up and promotion has slackened off more recently and needs to be re-energised. Tickets cost a pound and participants can win up to £25k. Around £60k pa goes to good causes (recipients include Atlantis Swimming Club and Southwater FC). A further £20k is retained to supplement other grant funding.
- **Voluntary Sector Support.** The previous VSS service was decommissioned a few years ago since it was not meeting the identified needs. More recently this has been brought in-house but the 3 person

team works independently and provides a strong and challenging voice on behalf of the voluntary sector. Key aspects of the VSS include matching volunteers to opportunities; support to groups seeking grant funding; mentoring and peer support structures; production of a regular newsletter; and running of events and training opportunities. In the last year 80 different groups were supported in grant funding applications with 22 accounting for £100k secured funding. Information on the remaining is not available but a conservative estimate would suggest around £250K may have been attracted with VSS support.

The challenges faced by the Service in delivering against a growing and increasingly demanding agenda were outlined. Principal amongst these are:

- Resource capacity. The team is relatively small in relation to the demand, and included 5 part-time members
- Reductions in statutory services. As economic factors continue to constrain public service delivery, there is growing pressure for community and voluntary resources to fill the gap. This requires greater availability of funding.
- The rural nature of the District (82%) is a consistent challenge with accessibility a major and enduring issue. Community initiatives such as the Henfield Haven, provide examples of local responses that are effective in tackling this issue.
- Funding. The Service is a discretionary rather than statutory one and, as such, could be vulnerable unless its value, worth and impact is fully recognised. Much of the delivery is focussed on early intervention and prevention that reduces the demand for later and more costly demands across the public sector.
- Rapidity of changing demand. The Service has to react quickly and effectively to new and changing demands – the Ukraine crisis and Cost of Living impacts being good examples that could not have been easily predicted or planned for.

Wider discussion covered a number of points of clarification and enquiry, including

- Funding is currently received to support Ukrainian refugees, but support to Syrian and Afghanis is directed through private landlords.
- The Horsham Refugee Support Group is now a standalone organisation with charitable status.
- Approaches to the Horsham Wellbeing centre have more than doubled in the last couple of years as a consequence of having a town centre presence. GPs are very supportive and it was suggested that an event to further promote this service would be valuable.

The meeting was very supportive of the wide ranging and high impact work being delivered by the team and it was agreed that similar sessions for other PDAGs and Councillors would be a considerable benefit to improving awareness.

3 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN, JULY 2022**

The Cabinet Forward Plan dated 10 July was noted.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN