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| Date: | 17 December 2015 |
| Title: | Community Forum Update |
| Purpose of the Report: | To provide an update following the recent Youth Forum event held on 21st October 2015 and future proposals for the Steering Group. |
| Contact Officer: | Jo Martindale, Committee Officer Sarah Hughes Community Engagement Manager CBC |

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the proposals are:

- 1.1 To note the resignation of the Chairman of the Community Forum Steering group and Spokesperson to the Partnership Committee.**
- 1.2 To request that the Committee formally thanks the Chairman for his significant contribution to 3 successful community events.**
- 1.3 To approve the suggestions for the future of the Community Forum for further discussion by the Community Forum Steering Group.**
- 1.4 To note the initial results prior to a more detailed evaluation report coming forward to the Partnership Committee meeting in February 2016 (Appendix D)**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting held August 2012, the Partnership Committee received a proposal for a community engagement model for Leighton-Linslade and resolved (Ref. 96/LLP) to form the Community Forum Steering Group which would be open to local residents, community groups and businesses. It would be jointly organised by Town and Central Bedfordshire Councils. The first steering group meeting took place on 20th November 2012.**
- 2.2 The steering group agreed that it would engage with the local community through Community Forum events to gather local views in order to influence future priorities and decisions regarding the local area. The Terms of Reference refer to two to three such events a year. The information generated would be fed back to the Partnership Committee. (TOR Appendix A)**
- 2.3 To date three such events have been organised and are summarised below:**

1. You and Your Town Centre: 9th February 2013

The first Community Forum took place on Saturday 9 February 2013 at The Library Theatre. The theme of the event was 'You and Your Town Centre'. Topics included: Access, Parking & Transport, Leisure & Events, Tourism & Heritage, Shopping & Markets and also Environment, Litter and Cleaning. The 2.5 hour event was attended by Mr Andrew Selous MP and local Councillors to provide feedback and expertise during breakout sessions. 150 people were head-counted during the event and 107 people successfully registered. With the forum attendance being double the expectation, the lack of space at the venue was the main negative feedback. Feedback forms were retrieved at the end of the event and a full evaluation report made available to the public post the event.

2. Healthy, Wealthy & Wise 22nd March 2014

The second Community Forum event took place on 22 March 2014 at Duncombe Day Centre. The key themes under discussion were: "Healthy, Wealthy and Wise". This translated to issues of health, finance and education. The themes for this event corresponded to feedback received from the first forum. Delegates were invited to join facilitated workshops to discuss children's issues, poverty, homelessness, debt, education, adult learning, young people and youth, elderly facilities and resources, medical facilities, safety and welfare. The workshops were led by local experts and organisations. There was a total of 75 registered attendees on the day in which 32% were residents and 49% were representing local community/business groups including schools. Attendance numbers for this event were significantly lower than before. A full evaluation report was collated and made available to the public. Requests for future forum topics included mental health and a focus on Young People as their attendance at the events thus far had been low. The Steering group volunteers helped organise the events planning and preparation however there were noticeably less people available to assist this time, which meant more time and work were required by the volunteers, both leading up to and on the day.

2.4 Following each Forum meeting, intelligence and action points are collated and shared with local agencies and organisation representatives who have responsibility for services. They are invited to comment on the raised issues or undertake appropriate action. A formal report is then presented to the Partnership Committee and published on the Town Council's web site.

2.5 This event led onto the theme for the Youth Forum that took place this year 2015.

3 YOUTH FORUM PROJECT

3.1 Prior to the Youth Forum event on October 22, the Steering Group undertook an online survey facilitated by staff at TACTIC which took place in Spring / Summer 2015. It was completed by 135 local young people at Cedars and Vandyke Upper schools and young people using the TACTC Centre. The results of the survey were used to shape the content of the Youth Forum

event(s) where we successfully engaged with TACTIC (14) Vandyke (79) Cedars (92) young people throughout the three forums giving us valuable feedback from 320 young people.

3.2 The data has been collated and organised into 5 key categories: health, transport, political/safety/police, information/volunteering and business/leisure. Service providers are being asked to respond to these issues.

3.3 A precis of the findings is attached at **Appendix B**. In his letter, the Chairman summarises the outcomes into four key themes raised by young people:

- “Massive concerns re mental health
- Strong desire for strong police presence
- Huge concerns regards personal safety
- Huge lack of awareness of current provisions

These were just a few of my headlines - there are many more!”

3.4 The Community Forum Steering Group met on 4th November to start this process and a further report with recommendations will be brought back to the Partnership Committee on 11th February 2016.

4. FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY FORUM

4.1 The Chairman has now stood down as the Community Forum Steering Group Chairman (see **Appendix C**).

4.2 The next meeting of the Steering Group is scheduled for Wednesday 20th January 2016 at which a discussion will need to take place regarding the future of the Community Forum.

4.3 Attendance at Steering group meetings has been in decline from 35 interested parties in 2012 to only 5 or 6 regular attendees at recent meetings. It is now becoming increasingly difficult to arrange Forum events and the necessary planning and preparation as well as the important post event follow up.

4.4 The suggested options for a way forward are presented below. This is predicated on the Committee’s continuing support for the public engagement model. To date, public feedback has been used to inform the delivery programme and actions of the Committee. As the forum is led by community organisations and members of the community, it is felt appropriate that they are best placed to explore what model would work best for them in order to manage their input and ensure productive and manageable engagement. There are different ways involvement can be achieved building on the success of recent events. Discussion to date has resulted in four operational models being created which this Committee is asked to further consider in advance of the forthcoming steering group meeting:-

- a) Continue as is with a small Community Forum Steering group to organise a maximum of one event per year in response to a local issue or need or opportunity.
or
- b) Better use of existing communication channels such as the About Town and Social media, the Central Bedfordshire e-zine to show case and celebrate community activity.
or
- c) Hold an Annual Partnership open meeting to report the work of the Committee, its achievements, successes and seek views on future priorities.
or
- d) Select one or two key issues to focus on through research, consultation and report back to the Partnership Committee.

4.4 Following on from the above, it is recommended that the Community Forum Steering group should be asked to Review the Terms of Reference to ensure it remains fit for purpose depending on which model is sighted as the preferred model to move forward (See Appendix A).

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 It is clear that the Community Forum events have been well organised and successful in engaging with a significant number of people. They have dealt with key current issues such as local development and rising personal debt by offering individuals the opportunity to discuss those issues with others. Attendance to such events can vary so consideration is needed on what engagement model would work best in the future for forum events and the steering group.

5.2 Despite the production of thorough evaluation reports, follow-up action to take forward the findings from forum events has been less successful, suggesting the need to focus on a few key topics endorsed by and adding value to the Partnership Committee. The suggestions on the way forward have been designed with this in mind and the Committee is asked to endorse these for further discussion by the Community Forum Steering group. The Steering group should report back to the Partnership Committee in March with a recommendation as to its future.

5.3 To date – membership and attendance figures are presented in the table below:

| Partnership Forum committee membership | Number of event attendees | Number of regular average attendance at steering group meetings |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| You and Your Town Centre: 9 th February 2013 | 150 attended | Approx. 10/12 |
| Healthy, Wealthy & Wise 22 nd March 2014 | 75 attended | Approx. 5/6 |
| Youth Forum: 27 October 2015 | 185 attended | Approx. 6/7 |

Appendix A

Leighton Linlade Community Forum Terms of Reference Feb 2015

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To serve as a Community led forum for all members of the Parish to meet and consult with each other at least once per year in a public place on matters pertaining to the town centre and all other areas of Leighton Linlade.
- 1.2 To prepare and publish the results of the Forum meeting in a report to the Partnership Committee, ward and town councillors reflecting on the matters of concern and interest raised by the Forum.
- 1.3 To help the Partnership Committee to realise their aspirations for the town centre and all other areas of Leighton-Linslade by providing a community engagement.
- 1.4 To enable Councillors to listen to what the citizens of the town's concerns are to help them in their decision making.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 To consult with the members of the Forum to get their views and ideas.
- 2.2 To acknowledge and record the comments and views of the Forum and to report with recommendations to the Partnership Committee and back to the attendees of the forum.
- 2.3 To establish any other comments and views on other subjects that is of concern to feedback to the Forum Committee for future reference.
- 2.4 To encourage the Partnership Committee to feedback to the Forum any progress or discussion on the points and views made at previous forums and to ask for action if needs be.

3. Membership

- 3.1 All citizens of Leighton Linlade.

4. Structure of Community Forum Steering Group

- 4.1. The Nominal Chairman of the Community Forum is Andrew Selous MP
- 4.2 The Committee will comprise representatives of community interest groups in the parish as well as individual residents. The meetings are open to all and decisions made by the participating members of the committee by voting, this excludes Central Bedfordshire Council or Leighton Linlade Town Council representatives/secretariats.'

4.3 The main body of the Community Forum are the citizens of Leighton-Linslade Parish

5. Secretariat

5.1 The secretariat will be provided by Leighton-Linslade Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council Officers

6. Decision-making arrangements

6.1 The format and schedule of the Forums will be decided by the Committee based on the feedback of the Forum meeting and actions from the Partnership Committee.

APPENDIX B

Dear Friends

My last major task as chair of the Community Forum Steering group was, at your request, to organise three youth forums. This was only possible with the Huge help of Jo Martindale (LLTC), Sarah Hughes (CBC) and Tracey Quinn and her wonderful team at Tactic. These three Ladies are a massive credit to all of us locally, they each went well above and beyond. In turn they were assisted by a few wonderful folk from the steering committee.

The Events, which were each very special , happened on Wednesday 21 October; thanks to the hospitality of Van Dyke and Cedars Schools, their Head teachers and Staff and to Tactic.

We have collated responses from over 300 young people within Leighton-Linslade, via the day and pre event electronic surveying. We asked "What they thought of the town today", "what were their hopes for it" and "What part they might play in it's development". We focused on the main areas that they highlighted in the survey responses and created a set of events to enable maximum quality feedback.

On the Day we were joined at each venue by various "Experts", Elected Members, Council Officers, Youth MP and volunteers from both the steering group and other friends. In addition CBC provided further electronic surveying equipment for instant responses during the voting panel's question time.

There is a huge amount of vitally important data from all these activities and I Strongly commend and in depth read there is much surprising, heartening and encouraging. But there is more that is very concerning, both regards our town and the thoughts and views of the young people who live here.

For myself, after 35 years of working with young people I thought little would surprise me.....how wrong I was

- Massive concerns re MENTAL HEALTH
- Strong desire for STRONG POLICE PRESCENSE
- Huge concerns regards personal safety
- Huge lack of awareness of current provisions

These were just a few of my headlines - there are many more!

This information must be acted on, all involved must be informed of outcomes and be given a chance to be part of the answers, solutions and resolutions. Some things have already been done, clearly there is much more that could be done, much from within the current resources. It appears we have let down a generation, it's not too late to make amends, let's engage further and let's act together. It was an honour to be a very small part of such a ground breaking day, let it not be an end! Please.

Rev Captain Paul Niemiec C.A., B.Th.
Community Priest, Ouzel Valley Team Ministry

APPENDIX C



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Dear Councillor

I tender my resignation from the post of Chair to the "Community Forum Steering group" as I have no clear idea of how I got the post nor of who appointed me, and given developments, you seemed to be the most appropriate person to address this note to.

I shall deliver the three upcoming youth forums and oversee the feedback.

I should like to offer my huge thanks to Jo Martindale and Sarah Hughes, in over 30 years of public service I have rarely come across such quality and commitment to service, I commend them both and only hope that you all realise how blessed you are to have two such wonderful people in your midst. Likewise I should wish to thank Mark, Vivien and Sarah Sandiford for the huge support that they too have given me. The very small remnant of Vol.Org. reps that still make up the steering group have been a great support and have worked hard for very little thanks.

Clearly much has changed in both Partnership committee and council makeups. I can only wish you all well in all your endeavours upon our behalf and assure you of my ongoing support. I will continue to work closely with both Officers and Elected members in our desire to make our town the best possible place to live, work and enjoy life.

Yours faithfully

Rev Captain Paul Niemiec C.A., B.Th.

Community Priest

Pioneer Minister

Minister in Charge; Church of the Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar; St Michael and All Angels, Great Billington