

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

OLDER PERSONS SUB-COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 1000 HOURS

Present: Councillors G Perham
 J M Freeman
 S Owen - Chair
 T Morris
 R Goodchild

Also in attendance: S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 N Bailey, Cultural & Economic Services
 Support Officer
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Joining remotely: I Hanton, Development & Commissioning
 Manager, Central Bedfordshire Council
 H Dobson, Managing Director, Citizens
 On-Line
 L Stainsby, Digital Champions Co-ordinator
 Citizens Online
 J Hunt, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

Members of the Public: 1

62/OP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Kharawala and the Town Clerk.

63/OP DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made and no dispensations had been requested.

64/OP QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public and representative of the Leighton-Linslade Helpers spoke to inform the Sub-Committee that plans were in progress to develop the community offer at the Meadow Way Community Centre and that this might include activities for the 55+ age group.

65/OP MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Sub-Committee received the draft minutes of the Older Persons Sub Committee held on 19 August 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Older Persons Sub Committee held on 19 August 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

(b) Updates from previous meeting:

Minute reference 57/OP (Questions from the Public): Members were informed that letters had been sent to all supermarkets regarding the question of digital exclusion in accessing supermarket loyalty schemes, but as yet no responses had been received. A follow up letter would be sent to the supermarkets and also to the local Member of Parliament.

66/OP CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATE

By invitation, Ian Hanton of Central Bedfordshire Council gave an update on the day centre offer for older residents, as well as the building work on the new Marigold House adult care facility. The build was slightly behind schedule but it was anticipated that Marigold House would be completed by the middle of 2023 and it was hoped the moving of residents from the existing Westlands facility would be completed by December 2023. Care is Central, a company wholly owned by the local authority, would operate the care facilities at the new home and a manager had been recruited, who would be in post from the end of December 2022/early January 2023, to run both the care home and day centre operation.

In addition to provision of activities within the day centre and care home, it was recognised as important to offer residents opportunities to go out into the community to mix with other people.

A question was raised regarding the amount of parking offered at the site and if this would be sufficient for both the care home and the day centre needs. It was confirmed there was parking at the site and drop-off facilities for mini-buses and other vehicles. There was not, however, a public bus stop planned for outside the centre but this would be looked at in the coming months along with a parking policy for the site.

The Sub-Committee thanked Ian Hanton for attending the meeting and providing an update. It was agreed that further dialogue could take place between both councils to provide updates and consider any opportunities for partnership working.

67/OP TECHNICAL SUPPORT HELPLINE

Two representatives of Citizens Online gave the Sub-Committee an update on the technical support project, which was now half-way through the two year contract. The Sub-Committee was informed that 7 new "digital champion" volunteers had been recruited and trained, 14 organisations had been engaged with and 35 individual learners had benefitted from the service, which offered digital support sessions, remote telephone-based support, drop-in sessions at the Chatty Café, or in-person support at various locations.

Advice was offered on how to use a device, how to make video calls, how to shop online, taking photos and general digital skills which enabled the user to connect with family, shops or organisations, thereby increasing independence and reducing isolation.

The helpline had been publicised using a variety of media and it was clear that print media was receiving the best response. This would be a focus moving forward as well as electronic publicity aimed at relatives of people needing support and word of mouth recommendations from those benefitting from the scheme. Other potential sources of publicity would be explored.

A question was raised whether there were any schemes in the area that offered old/second hand devices. It was confirmed that the Leighton-Linslade Helpers had a bank of second-hand phones which had been donated by local businesses and information regarding this would be passed through to Citizens Online.

Representatives of Citizens Online were thanked for their work to date, their comprehensive report and for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED to note the report.

68/OP COMMUNITY AGENT SCHEME LAUNCH

A representative of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity gave an update on the Community Agent initiative which had launched in September 2022. The Sub-Committee also received a report outlining that the Agent had already supported 13 residents with a range of queries relating to matters such as health, money and carer support. The role of the Community Agent was to signpost the client to the appropriate organisation or service. It was felt that the scheme had got off to a strong start due to good publicity and moving forward, the Agent would also be working closely with other sources of support for residents such as the Helping Hands “good neighbours” scheme and social prescribers.

RESOLVED to note the information.

69/OP AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on an initiative led by the World Health Organisation in respect of developing ‘Age Friendly Communities’.

The Age-Friendly Communities Network adopted a 4-step programme cycle to help communities move towards becoming more age friendly. The stages were to engage and understand, to plan strategically, to evaluate and act and to implement. On average, this was a five-year commitment, with two years to deliver a baseline assessment and action plan. Membership was free and would provide access to examples of good practice across the country and beyond, which was considered could be beneficial to the Council.

It was agreed that in essence, the scheme reflected the work the Council had already undertaken and was already progressing and therefore would not result in any additional work, but could be of benefit and underpin the Council’s commitment to supporting older members of the community.

RECOMMENDED to the Cultural & Economic Committee that the Council sign up to become part of the World Health Organisation Age Friendly City and Communities to expand networks and enjoy the benefits of best practice working.

70/OP TABLET LOAN UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received an update report on the proposal to launch a digital tablet device lending scheme. This aspiration had been identified at the start of the 55UP project, with £15,000 budget allocated to this purpose.

Following on from discussion at the previous meeting, a number of discussions had taken place with BRCC, who had themselves accessed grant funding to provide loan tablet devices and internet routers to those in need, to address digital exclusion. BRCC was running I.T. related schemes elsewhere in the county but had agreed to link up with the Town Council's 55UP scheme to provide this service in Leighton-Linslade. The Town Council now had access to devices to lend out and detailed discussions had led to the development of a process for doing this, through referrals made by the digital champions of the Citizens Online digital support programme. This process would ensure residents could then be supported in use of the devices by the digital champions. Those in receipt of devices would need to sign a loan agreement.

As this aspiration was able to be delivered without financial contribution, it was suggested that the funds could be used for further 55UP projects.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To endorse the proposed procedure to establish a tablet and router lending scheme.**
- (c) To endorse that the £15,000 allocated to the tablet lending scheme continue to be ringfenced, to be used for other aspects of the 55UP programme.**

71/OP BUDGET REPORT

The Sub Committee received an update of the budget for the 55UP project to date. Of the £80,000 originally allocated from the Future Projects budget, £18,604.40 remained available. The majority of this (£15,000) was due to funds not being required for the tablet device loan scheme.

It was suggested that in light of future potential projects which could include supporting the day care offer for older people and tackling isolation in older men, these funds should continue to be ringfenced. In addition, it was suggested that this work would be ongoing and consideration should be given to inclusion of a budget line in the annual revenue budget. In particular, it was noted that the current contract for the digital support helpline would end in October 2023, half way through the financial year, but given the positive response and impact, it was likely the council would want to continue to support the digital exclusion agenda.

Given the above and the recommendation to formally become an Age Friendly Community, it was suggested that the Older Persons Sub-Committee should continue past May 2023. A proposal was made that it should continue for the first year of the new council and could then be considered further.

RECOMMENDED to the Cultural & Economic Services Committee:

- (i) That the remaining £18,604.40 in an earmarked reserve for the 55UP project continue to be ringfenced for additional projects to support older residents.**
- (ii) That a new revenue budget line be established for Older People from 1 April 2023, with an initial budget allocation of £9,000 to fund continuation of the digital support project from October 2023 – March 2024 (noting that this reflected half yearly costs and that consideration might need to be given to increasing this from 2024-25).**
- (iii) That the Older Persons Sub-Committee continue through municipal year 2023-2024.**

72/OP NEXT STEPS

Members of the group considered the next steps for the 55UP programme and the Sub Committee and agreed the success achieved should be shared with the Cultural and Economic Committee with a report stating key points and future plans taken to the next meeting in December 2023.

The meeting closed at 12:05 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2022.

Chair

2 MARCH 2023