

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

OLDER PERSONS SUB-COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 26 MAY 2022 AT 1000 HOURS

Present: Councillors G Perham
 J M Freeman
 S Owen
 R Goodchild

Also in attendance: V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic
 Services (remotely)
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 L Stainsby (Digital Champion Co-ordinator,
 Citizens Online)

Members of the Public: 0

45/OP APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2022-2023

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor S Owen be appointed Chair of the Sub-Committee for 2022-23. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor S Owen as Chair of the Older Persons Sub-Committee for 2022-23.

Councillor Owen took the Chair.

46/OP APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2022-2023

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor M Freeman be appointed Vice Chair of the Sub-Committee for 2022-23. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor M Freeman as Vice Chair of the Older Persons Sub-Committee for 2022-23.

47/OP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Morris and Kharawala.

48/OP DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Goodchild declared a personal interest as Chair of Salisbury House GP surgery Patient Participation Group.

49/OP QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

50/OP MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The sub-committee received the draft minutes of the Old Persons Sub Committee held on 17 February 2022. A typographical error would be corrected.

RESOLVED that that minutes of the meeting of the Older Persons Sub Committee held on 17 February 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

(b) It was noted that contractors for the new care home Marigold House had recently issued a newsletter. The Chair advised he would invite Central Bedfordshire Council colleagues to give a further update about the project later in the year.

42/OP It was also noted that Cultural and Economic Services Committee had agreed the recommendation to award 55up Grant Funds and that funds had been issued.

43/OP A correction was made to the heading; 'Delivery'. Committee was advised that recruitment had taken place with an offer being made subject to satisfactory references. It was hoped the new person could start in late June and continue with the project work.

51/OP 55UP TECHNOLOGY HELPLINE UPDATE

By invitation, Liz Stainsby, Digital Champion Co-ordinator of Citizens Online attended the meeting to give a report and presentation regarding the 55Up technology helpline project.

The Sub-Committee heard about previous experience in other locations and how the Digital Champion role worked. Citizens Online had generally found that learners were an even male-female split and ranged from complete beginners to those with a little digital experience but wishing to learn more. Some learners had previously had no interest in using technology and finding something that linked to their interests was key (e.g. cooking, gardening, sport). Support was given in different ways such as 1-1 appointments, drop-in sessions or small groups. Often the learning was focussed on a specific task for example online shopping, using social media or setting up an app such as the NHS app. Online safety was continually promoted and explained.

Feedback had shown that people tended to learn best when shown what to do and then supported to do it themselves. Digital champions did not need to be technology experts but required lots of patience and enthusiasm. Citizens Online offered ongoing training and support to champions.

Callers to the helpline could leave a message and would be called back by a co-ordinator, who would further assess their needs and either assign to a volunteer champion for remote support or advise what face to face options were available. For face-to-face support people would usually see the same champion and therefore be able to build up trust.

Research showed that Leighton-Linslade had just under 30% of its population in the 55+ age bracket, many of whom were already online but might still need support expanding their digital skills.

The helpline was being promoted by way of social media (targeted to friends and family), advertisements in the local newspaper, Bee Local magazine and About Town newsletter and inclusion in the Bassett Road surgery PPG newsletter as well as the emerging updated version of the “yellow book” of information for older people. Citizens Online had also been networking with local organisations.

One digital champion was awaiting a DBS check before being able to start offering support at the Tuesday Chatty Café. Another champion would offer remote only support and interest had been expressed by several others. The focus in the short term would be on continuing to recruit and train volunteers, to start face to face support sessions and to continue promoting the scheme. Discussions would also continue with the Leighton Buzzard Library service about the potential for partnership working.

A query was raised about how success would be measured. The aspiration was to recruit 20 digital champions over the initial two-year project term to provide a sound basis for the future. The impact would be measured by individual case studies.

Ms Stainsby was thanked for her presentation and for attending the meeting.

52/OP COMMUNITY AGENTS

Further to previous discussion, officers had undertaken further research into the potential for funding or part funding a “Community Agent” through the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity. An example was given of Biggleswade where the scheme had operated since 2016 and was now an ongoing contract. Biggleswade town council funded one person for two days per week with regular reports to committee demonstrating that the impact could be meaningful.

A cost for the period September 2022-March 2023 had been obtained at £8,476 to include £750 start up costs. The cost for the following full financial year would be £13,212.

The sub committee noted that costs for the current year could be covered by the £10,780.40 underspend from monies previously allocated to projects that came in under the estimated spend. However, future funding would need careful consideration and council support. It was felt that such a scheme would need to run for at least two full years to see any demonstrable impact.

It was proposed and seconded that a recommendation be put forward to the parent committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDED to the Cultural and Economic Services Committee to support the funding of a Community Agent through BRCC for an initial period of 2 years and 7 months from September 2022, with costs for 2022-23 to be met from existing Older Persons budget allocation but noting that

commitment to funding for the next two financial years would be required by Council to demonstrate any meaningful impact.

It was noted that should the project proceed, the role of the sub committee might change to primarily monitoring of the service contracts with BRCC and Citizens Online and this would need further discussion.

53/OP PROJECT UPDATES

Early-stage discussions on the potential to partner with Leighton Buzzard Library for a tablet loan scheme had taken place. Progressing setting up the loan scheme was held until the Technology Helpline was up and running first. Committee has allocated £15k of its original budget towards the creation of the loan scheme. The library service was short staffed following the pandemic but was now actively recruiting so it was hoped that discussions could be reconvened once the new officer was in place.

There were no updates regarding the yellow book update or the grant scheme.

54/OP NEXT MEETING DATES

The next meeting would be provisionally moved to Friday, 19 August at 10:00am but this would be confirmed depending on staff availability.

It was suggested that BRCC and the Helping Hands group could be invited to attend the next meeting.

The sub committee placed on record its thanks to Sarah Jewell and Vivien Cannon for their considerable work in progressing the projects supporting older people and wished them all the best for the future.

The meeting closed at 11:30 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2022.

Chair

19 AUGUST 2022