

Purpose

To receive a presentation from Solette Sheppardson, Chief Executive Officer.

1.0 Background

1.1 Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS) is a not for profit organisation that covers the areas of: Surrey Heath, Spelthorne and Runneymede. Its role is primarily designed to be an infrastructure organisation which focuses on supporting the community and voluntary organisations, that average 400 within Surrey Heath.

1.2 During the Covid-19 lockdown period VSNS worked in partnership with Surrey Heath Prepared and their comprehensive community support. With the closure many of the volunteers chose to keep volunteering. This is shown with the first quarter registered numbers of 1683, of which 1654 were referred and to date 204 have been placed. For this same period there were no requests for vetting and barring (DBS) checks, but this is expected to pick-up now that the lockdown measures have eased.

1.3 The organisation works hard in providing a good communication platform of the services and support with 800+ emails being sent weekly providing the latest information available, amongst other awareness building initiatives. Other services offered consist of training opportunities, governance and specialist funding advice.

1.4 The staffing levels that provide the service in 3 Boroughs equates to 6 FTE.

1.5 The corporate volunteering and engagement programme continues to grow and has engaged with Costa, ADP, Enterprise, and Collectively Camberley.

2.0 The Finance

2.1 The organisation receives a revenue grant of £30,000 for the services provided within Surrey Heath, and this is consistent with other districts who contribute to the overall operational funding.

From April 2020 a further £10,000 was added to meet the demand for the visiting and befriending service that was launched by VSNS, named Time To Talk, which now provides a telephone befriending service to 47 people and has attracted a further 3 new volunteers to call isolated people in Surrey Heath.

VSNS are located in the Ian Goodchild Centre, along with Camberley Care and other local groups. A new 2 year lease will start from the 1st April 2019, which the Council will continue to support by subsidising rent at £2,550 per annum, plus maintenance costs and reduced car parking charges. It is estimated that this will provide a benefit in kind value of £9,000.

3.0 Working in Partnership with Surrey Heath Clinical Commissioning Group

The Social Prescribing service partners consist of SHBC/VSNS/Citizens Advice and Surrey Heath Clinical Commissioning Group and its aim is to put local residents in touch with a wide range of activities and local services in the community to support overall wellbeing.

The range of services includes accessing social and leisure activities, independent living, transport, financial advice, disability and mental or emotional support. A social prescription is available to all adults who are registered with a Surrey Heath GP Surgery. This is the successful outcome of a bid co-ordinated by VSNS that will provide a dedicated social prescribing link and officer resource for the next 4 years.

Partnership Working

4.0 The Amigo Project

The Amigo Project is delivered in partnership with Catalyst and is designed to enhance emotional well-being was launched in 2018. The project volunteers support people who need encouragement to move forward on their journey of recovery from mental ill health, by making connections within the local community and enable them to take up interesting activities to boost confidence and increase motivation.

VSNS recruit volunteers who are trained and supported. This project covers the residents of; Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, West Elmbridge and Woking.

4.1 Time to Talk Project

'Time to Talk' is a specific project that was introduced in early 2019 in order to meet a local need with VSNS. Via a dedicated member of staff, the project enabled local volunteers to work within the community to deliver the project which is designed to alleviate isolation and loneliness.

The service is fully compliant and supported through ongoing training. One of our Time to Talk volunteers states 'I would definitely recommend volunteering to anyone that is able to do it. An hour a week is nothing, yet it makes such a difference to someone else's life'.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider the presentation in relation to Surrey Heath any future steps which Members would wish to recommend to the Executive and/or Council.

Background Papers: None Service Level Report Q1 20/21
Author: Jayne Boitout 01276 707464
e-mail: jayne.boitout@surreyheath.gov.uk

Service Head: Louise Livingston Executive Head of Transformation