

Notes of a Meeting of the Poverty Working Group - 4 November 2020

Members Present:

Cllr Shaun Garrett (Chairman)
Trefor Hogg, Old Dean Community Group (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Rodney Bates
Cllr Colin Dougan
Karen Kendall, Churches Together
Cllr Alan McClafferty
Robert Mills, Accent Housing
Kate Sawdy, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath
Gregg Scott, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath

In Attendance: Cllr Adrian Page

Officers: Jayne Boitoult, Emily Burrill, Gail Bushell, Louise Livingston and Jenny Rickard

Apologies Received:

Cllr Josephine Hawkins

1 Election of Chairman for the Municipal Year

AGREED that

- i. **Councillor Shaun Garrett be elected as a Chairman for the 2020/21 municipal year;**
- ii. **a Vice-Chairman be elected;**
- iii. **and that Trefor Hogg be elected as Vice-Chairman for the 2020/21 municipal year.**

2 Key Objectives

The Working Group reviewed and discussed its key objectives which had been agreed at the 20 October 2020 meeting of the Executive.

It was acknowledged that initially the Group would comprise of Councillors covering Old Dean, Watchetts and St Michael's Wards; as well as various charities, community groups, voluntary sector organisations, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Accent Housing. It was noted that the group had the potential to include Councillors from a wider variety of Wards in the future.

Members of the Group were made aware that in addition to the individual hardship fund which was to be administered by Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, there were a number of already existing funds which were available to the Borough's residents which had fallen upon hard times. Whilst it was recognised it was hard to identify the specific eligible cases and that the grant's criteria needed reviewing, there was a Brexit Hardship Fund available via Citizens Advice Surrey Heath. In addition there was an Accent Support Fund available to Accent tenants which had been put on Furlough; and were working with Accent to continue rent payment in conjunction with some agreed rent reduction. In addition a Ward Councillor

Community Fund had been agreed at the 20 October 2020 Executive Meeting; which would be reviewed in tandem with the Community Fund Grant scheme at the February 2021 Meeting of the Executive.

It was reported that in respect of the objective relating to the analysis of DWP data on recipients of Universal Credit within the Borough, that data had in fact been received. It was reported that the numbers of recipients of universal credit in the Borough had risen steeply and now totalled at over 650. In addition, it was highlighted there were significant impacts of being on Universal Credit on residents' health and wellbeing.

The group were updated that the Council-received Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) funds had already been used to fund local food banks; and that the Council's Officers were organising a communications campaign to promote the services available to residents' during times of hardship.

The Working Group discussed the holding of a stakeholder event, which would bring together third sector organisations, community groups, public sector organisations; and the leaders of initiatives aiming to alleviate food poverty. It was confirmed that the event would be held virtually via Zoom; and could feature the use of the breakout room feature. A date during the day of 10 December 2020 was agreed for the event.

AGREED that a Surrey Heath Poverty stakeholder event be held on 10 December 2020 via Zoom.

3 Any Other Business

It was agreed that Food Poverty and specifically the provision of the Free School Meals should be included in the scope of the Group. It was acknowledged that the immanency of the December school holidays created an opportunity for an instant positive outcome of the Working Group; and that the Group had the right contacts to make a successful coalition of the willing around the project. In addition it was raised that there was potential for a Food Poverty Funding Scheme; which could run concurrently with the Councillor Community Fund Scheme and provide financial support to schemes such as the High Cross Church and the Old Dean Community Group initiatives.

It was suggested that in line with the Cooperative Party's Food Justice Campaign that Surrey Heath should appoint a Food Champion and formalise a food partnership.

AGREED that Food Poverty and Free School Meals would be included in the scope of the Group