

Notes of a Meeting of the Poverty Working Group - 23 November 2020

Members Present:

Trefor Hogg, Old Dean Community Group (Vice Chairman) (in the Chair)

Cllr Rodney Bates

Cllr Colin Dougan

Reverend Andrew Knowles, St Marys Church

Cllr Alan McClafferty

Robert Mills, Accent Housing

Reverend Chris Richardson, St Martins Church

Kate Sawdy, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath

Gregg Scott, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath

In Attendance: Cllr Josephine Hawkins

Officers: Jayne Boitout, Emily Burrill, Louise Livingston and Jenny Rickard

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shaun Garrett.

5 Notes of the last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were agreed by the Group.

It was acknowledged since the last meeting of the Group, that Central Government had pledged funding for holiday-time free school meal provision; and it was noted Surrey County Council had to be formally asked what their plans were as the responsible body, now that they had received the required funding.

In addition it was emphasised by members of the Group that during the first lockdown period, Surrey County Council were not directly involved in school meal provision; and that the voucher scheme was conducted directly between the schools and Central Government.

AGREED that Officers report back at the next meeting on how Surrey plan to support the Free School Meals families between 18 December and 4 January so that action could be taken if necessary.

6 Signposting of Services Communications Campaign

It was reported to the Group that the campaign, which signposted in-need residents to the Council and/or Citizens Advice Surrey Heath had gone live. As well as the electronic social media campaign, 5,000 leaflets had been placed in GP and dentist surgeries. Moreover larger versions of the campaign material in a poster format had been placed on the Borough noticeboards. Several members of the Group recognised the attractive and concise branding of the campaign, and it was agreed that Councillor Alan McClafferty would find additional funding for the

campaign and expedite use of banners and large-scaled posters within the Borough.

AGREED that Councillor Alan McClafferty work with Council Officers to expedite the use of banners and large-scaled posters within the Borough.

7 Available Council Grant Schemes

It was reported to the Group that the Individual Councillor Grant Scheme was set to go live on 1 December 2020 and was to run on a pro-rated basis for its first year till 31 March 2020. The fund enabled ward Councillors greater agency 'to say yes', to funding of projects and local organisations and brought Borough Councillors in line with County and Parish Councillors, whom already had similar pots of funding. It was acknowledged that there was little set criteria for the scheme and that grant recipients were largely down to individual Councillor preference.

8 Stakeholder Consultation event

The Group received updated plans for the upcoming Working Group stakeholder consultation event due to take place in mid-December.

It was planned that the event would be opened by the Chairman of the Group, together with the relevant portfolio holders, whom would outline their experiences tackling poverty at a ward Councillor level and would give a brief synopsis of the received Department Work and Pensions Universal Credit data. Kate Sawdy would then provide a short presentation sketching the trends which Citizens Advice Surrey Heath were seeing in respect of customer cases.

Following the presentations it was proposed that the event would breakout into 3 smaller groups relating to Council wards: Old Dean; St Michaels and Watchetts; and all other wards. Each group would include at least 1 elected Member and a range of third sector and community groups. The breakout group conversations would be guided by questions focussing on identifying the issues within the area, the availability, access and effectiveness of existing services and the practical help which the Council could provide in the relevant area. It was envisaged that the breakout rooms would then be followed by a plenary session which would draw out the pertinent points for future consideration.

Members of the Working Group gave their feedback on the plans and concurred that 90 minutes was a good target time for the duration of the event. In addition it was suggested that the stakeholder event could act as a blueprint and template on how to consult on the Council's services and that it would be worth considering for the Working Group to hold this event annually or bi-annually. It was also emphasised that the event should be focussed on how the Council could help already existing and develop services.

9 Any Other Business

It was acknowledged that the Old Dean Community Weekly Food Project had seen a significant rise in demand which reflected the significant increase of those which had recently gone onto Universal Credit.

Whilst it was reaffirmed that the Group's focus was on absolute poverty, it was acknowledged that economic poverty also severely affected residents' health and wellbeing including mental health. Thereby it was emphasised that it was important for the Council to link with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the social prescribers when it came to the link between poverty and health and wellbeing.

It was acknowledged that the Working Group would note its terms of reference at the next meeting of the Group on 7 December 2020.