

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A.3 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(Report prepared by Alison Rowlands)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To examine the informal partnerships that were harnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns in 2020/21 and consider how those partnerships can inform future community partnerships going forward. Although the detail provided in this report was not specifically identified by Council for enquiry by the Committee, it was agreed with the Committee's Chairman to submit this information to it.

BACKGROUND

Partnership working, be it formal or informal, is consistent with the Council's commitment to put Community Leadership at the heart of everything we do through delivery of high quality, affordable services and working positively with others.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of voluntary and community groups emerged in support of the most vulnerable and isolated residents across Tendring. The council responded by collecting and mapping out local voluntary and community group capability and making details of these groups and the services they offered widely available, to ensure those most in need of help could be promptly signposted to it. The groups in question provided a varied scale of assistance, ranging from help with accessing food and medicines, welfare checks and benefit help, mental health support and advice and telephone contact to help lessen feelings of isolation and boredom.

A large number of these groups were very localised and in many cases, consisted simply of supportive neighbours. Whilst these groups disbanded after the first and second waves of the pandemic had passed, we have established a clear process for capturing and communicating such information, to ensure residents are appropriately signposted. With the lifting of restrictions and the reopening of society, an opportunity now exists to reassess the support available through ongoing engagement with the voluntary and community sector in order to identify any changes to the data we hold, whether any gaps exist and if so, to address them where possible.

In addition to the above, there are a range of community groups that the council is currently working with as a result of the £220,000 successful funding bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), received in January 2021. The MHCLG's Community Champions scheme aims to expand work to support those most at risk from Covid-19 and boost vaccine take up. In particular, it sought to provide additional support to particularly disadvantaged groups, such as disabled residents and the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community, by developing new networks of trusted local champions where they did not already exist.

In April 2021, following a meeting of the Community Champions Grant Panel, it was decided that the MHCLG funding should be distributed, as set out in the table below.

Name of Organisation	Amount Allocated
----------------------	------------------

SUMMIT	£22,630
African Families in the UK	£25,000
The Ark Centre	£9,000
Age Concern	£9,700
CVS Tendring	£15,000
Colchester Chinese Culture Society	£9,450
Tendring Community Transport	£15,000
Harwich Connexions Transport	£15,000
Walton Pre-School	£9,000
Digital Access Team	£25,000
Home-Start	£8,750
Tendring Eldercare	£9,700

For some organisations, the projects being funded were already in place but were at risk of ending or reducing. The Community Champions funding has allowed their work to be extended to increase either the number of days where support is offered, or the number of people they are able to reach. The grant funding has also provided the opportunity for some organisations to employ part time Community Champions, whose roles are specifically to work within the community and provide support and guidance. Where deprivation and isolation has been exacerbated by the pandemic in some areas, the Community Champions working within the district have created a link between the local community and the Council and local support services.

As a Council, we have been keen to ensure this scheme has forged stronger relationships within these local groups, opened additional lines of communication and provided a mechanism for accurate and relevant information to be shared. The Project Manager role has created a link between each funded organisation and has shared best practice, where relevant and beneficial. The Community Champions programme has allowed stakeholders to gain valuable information through review meetings held between the Project Manager and the funded organisations. It is unlikely that a forum of this kind would naturally have been created. The Community Champions funding has provided a platform for open and honest discussions and the sharing of such information.

Tendring District Council and the funded organisations are keen to retain and build upon the relationships and networks forged via the Community Champions project. Steps are being put in place to link Council Departments with organisations within the wider community. The Council will continue to work closely and in support of Community Voluntary Services Tendring to achieve a coherent and co-ordinated response to the needs of the local community.

Although the Community Champions project was primarily in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the relationships that have been forged with local organisations have proven to be valuable to the Council. It has allowed a greater understanding of the diversity within our local community and thus ensure services remain accessible to our residents within the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) that the report and presentation regarding Community Partnerships and Covid-19 be noted; and

(b) the Committee considers whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward to Cabinet

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

There are none.

APPENDICES

There are none
