

PEOPLE & PLACES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Dyball (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs. Alger, P. Darrington, Edwards-Winsor, Granville, Gustard, Hogarth and Hudson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bulford, Manamperi and Cathy Morgan

Cllrs. Bulford, Lindop and Manston were also present via virtual media platform, which does not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

12. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the People & Places Advisory Committee held on 20 June 2023, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. Declarations of interest

There were none.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman, with the Committee's agreement, brought forward consideration of agenda item 9 - Care Leavers Support.

14. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

15. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

16. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder updated the Committee on recent highlights within her Portfolio, and advised that since the last Advisory Committee there had been 20 family fun days and she was grateful to the team for the work put into organising these. The family fun days provided lots of different activities which over 2500

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families attended. The Committee was shown a short video from the Family Fun days.

She further advised that it had been a busy few months with the Community Mobilisation programme and promoting its Better Together Hub, which had helped get people back into work and training; supported resident and community groups to set up activities in their local areas and supported town and parish councils to establish a network of warm and safe spaces, as part of our Cost of Living support. In order to help community groups and organisations get access to grant funding, two funding events were scheduled to take place.

The support for Homes for Ukraine Scheme continued and many residents in the District had opened their homes to families seeking asylum. The Council continued to work with Kent County Council alongside the hosts and guests. A consultation went out to guests and hosts at the end of the month to ask their views on the scheme as well as feedback on the help required, from housing advice, access to support including digital skills, English as a Second Language (ESOL), training and skills. Two evening event will be held to provide advice on housing, mental health and wellbeing and employment on Monday 16 October in Sevenoaks and Thursday 2 November in Swanley.

Silver Sunday will run from 1 October until December and our booklet has been sent to all Councillors encouraging Members to attend some of the events, as there was a wide range of activities from tea dances to walking groups on offer. The Supported Intern Scheme with Broomhill Bank was going from strength to strength with three new interns joining the Council in September

The new Kent Police Neighbourhood Policing model went live on 7 June. The main changes included an increase in Police Constables and Beat Officers, who will not only have more on-street visibility, but powers of arrest and enforcement. It was hoped by next summer the full quota of 12 Beat Officers and neighbourhood task team would be in post.

Working with neighbouring councils Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling, alongside Kent Police, the first partners meeting was held to discuss Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) in Public Spaces. An action plan had been devised and the group would be meeting again in November. The Council were also working on the 16 days of action against violence against women and girls, which would start in November and a conference was being organised in support of this. Invitations would be sent out in due course.

In closing, the Committee was advised that there was a round table discussion on shoplifting across the District on 9 October with Police, PCC and its host Laura Trott MP.

17. Care Leavers Support

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The Chief Officer, People and Places presented the report which set out the statutory corporate parenting responsibilities and funding arrangements for care leavers under Kent County Council (KCC) whilst outlining the support provided through Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) to its customers, including care leavers. It also broke down the number of care leavers in Kent, by district.

The report also detailed the other organisations who had signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant. She noted that only councils with the statutory duty as corporate parent had signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant. Nationally, no lower tier Borough and District Councils had signed up.

She advised that following KCC's Cabinet meeting on 12 September, the KCC Cabinet had agreed to end supported accommodation on a care leavers 19th birthday. At present this support had been until they were 21 years old or 25 years in some circumstances. The removal of this support service was due to budget efficiencies. This change could have a significant impact on SDC in that the care leavers could be served with an eviction notice and would likely present to local housing authorities, which would not only impact staffing resources, but also homelessness budgets.

Members discussed the report and some concerns were expressed that KCC were reducing their support to 19 year olds and the risks, including officer and financial resources that this could have on SDC. Members noted that SDC was in a good position with support that it offered but questioned how the Council would be affected by signing the covenant and whether it was possible to sign the covenant without committing to all the requirements associated with it.

In response to questions Members were advised that care leavers should have a personal adviser provided by KCC to support them and KCC received funding from central government to enable their care leaver offer under their statutory obligations. SDC did not receive any funding to offer bespoke care leaver support. She advised that signing up to the Covenant, the Council would need to demonstrate that it is able to meet the Covenant's pledges. This would take away vital staff resources from helping customers directly.

Members were advised that a key concern and risk is SDC are the only District Council signatory in Kent, such a commitment could present a significant resource burden on SDC, with care leavers from across Kent being signposted into the Sevenoaks District. This would likely reduce and detract from the meaningful support we currently have in place for care leavers. This risk is heightened in light of KCC's significant budget pressures and efficiency proposals, which includes services being reduced or removed.

The Chief Officer, People & Places advised that in the previous month 156 customer enquiries had been made to the HERO team, many with complex issues, including health, employment, benefit advice and debt advice and these customers would be impacted if resources were taken away for paperwork. SDC's Housing, Energy, Retraining Officers (HERO) Team were a single point of contact for any care leavers who were in the district.

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In response to further questions Members were advised that it was KCC's responsibility as the corporate parent to assist care leavers into training and employment. Sevenoaks District Council provides details of all its current vacancies to KCC and were looking at developing a recruitment policy to ensure that care leavers and veterans are provided with an opportunity for interview, should they meet the criteria.

In summing up the Chairman advised that the report was thorough and detailed and discussion had raised comments on signing up and the additional workload it could put on SDC resources. Details had been provided regarding the level of support that already existed for care leavers across the district and the work that SDC undertook to support the care leavers with wrap around support.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The statutory corporate responsibility and associated Government funding assigned to KCC to support care leavers, be noted;
- b) To date, the Care Leavers Covenant had been signed up to by councils with a statutory responsibility and associated funding for children's services and care leavers, be noted;
- c) That the support provided by SDC to its customers, including care leavers, through existing service provision and resources, be acknowledged;
- d) That the Council should not become a formal signatory of the Care Leavers Covenant, noting there were risks and resource implications (staffing and budget) to the Council in meeting the Charter's five pledges; and the report, be noted.

18. Community Plan Update

The Health and Communities Manager presented the report which set out the work of the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) Community Plan from April 2022 to March 2023. She advised that the plan set out a vision that reflected what local people had told the Council was important to them in the District. The vision was over a period of 10 years (2022- 2032) and was supported by a three-year plan which detailed the priorities for action. The current three year plan would end in March 2023.

The document was partnership based and the LSP group met on a quarterly basis with local businesses, community organisations and statutory organisations who

delivered part of the plan. This year there were four new initiatives the put forward for “our place, our economy, our business and out community.” There were 25 actions in the plan with a target of 85% for green indicators. At the end of the first year 93% had been achieved. The missed targets due to data from third parties not being forthcoming, but since then conversations have taken place at data regarding the number of young people not in education or employment should now be coming through. One target was missed, as Kent County Council did not roll out the Community Wi-Fi in St. Mary’s ward in Swanley due to the cost implications. This has been changed on the plan going forward. Overall the results were positive and the partners had continued to deliver across the District.

Members discussed the report, noting that broadband issues had been ongoing with KCC for a number of years, and highlighting the opportunity for Community broadband as set up in Underriver. It was also noted that the report highlighted a number of positives.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the report be considered and noted.

19. Community Grant Scheme 2022/23 Update

The Health and Communities Manager presented the report which set out the monitoring information about the Community Grants delivered in 2022/23. In total 18 Community grants were awarded totalling £49,800, and the full list of projects, services and activities funded were detailed in Appendix A to the report.

Members were advised that each grant was awarded with a set of conditions, within these conditions there were requirements to provide key performance indicators, description of any changes made when delivering the project, service or activity and any lessons learnt. Members were informed that on occasions it was necessary for a project to be amended due to reasons outside any Organisations control and this had been built on following the experience of delivering schemes through Covid, where an adjustable approach was undertaken.

The Committee was advised that as part of the change for Community Grants for 2024/25, social value engine which would assist with monitoring tangible costs and quantifying the wider social, economic and environmental outcomes. Members’ attention was brought to the case studies which highlighted the benefits of the Community Grants.

In response to questions Members were advised that if a bid was unsuccessful then feedback was provided where the scheme may have fallen down and suggestions for where other funding may be sought from. The form was available online, but a paper copy could be filled in. Members were advised that Parish and Town Councils could sign up for funding emails from the Council and updates could also be provided as part of the Clerks forum. The scheme was once again open for applications.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty

Resolved: That the report be noted.

20. Community Mobilisation Programme

The Health and Communities Manager presented the report and presented which provided an update on the community mobilisation work that had been carried out across the District, and highlighted a number of successful projects and case studies. Members were advised that the main aims for the project was to help the community to help themselves, the Council having an online community platform, gain more volunteers, help the community to deliver local projects and to help the community to get connected.

Better together built on the 'hands on' projects that had been created during the pandemic in neighbourhoods and was helping to provide practical support, skill development, online directory, community toolkit and more and this was all detailed on the new website, www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk As part of the continued work, Community Mobilisation grants was launched in March 2023 until the end of 2025, as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which would support individual and new/existing community groups. Currently Round 1 of the 2023-24 funding had finished with 7 projects being funded and Round 2 of the funding due to open in January 2024.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the update of the Community Mobilisation work be noted.

21. Work Plan

Members were advised that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund updates, and Economic Development Strategy would be considered by Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee and the changes to the work plan were noted:

30 November 2023

Interim Leisure Operator - Monitoring report
Public Spaces Protection Order Consultation results
Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)
Voluntary Sector Barometer Survey

5 March 2024

Community Grants 2024/25
Citizens Advice Service Level agreement 2024-2027
Sevenoaks District Community Safety Action Plan
Broomhill Bank School Internship Update.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.40 PM

CHAIRMAN