

Councillors Briefing Note No.272

Topic: Wiltshire Good Neighbour Scheme

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Introduction and background

This briefing note has been prepared for members to provide a summary of the decision to devolve budget currently used to fund the Good Neighbours service to Area Boards to target social isolation, loneliness and well-being.

Wiltshire Council entered into a partnership with Community First in 2010. This partnership comes to an end in April 2016 and the decision has been made not to renew the agreement but work differently by facilitating local wellbeing through the area boards.

Wiltshire Good Neighbours (WGN) has been delivered by Wiltshire Community First since September 2010 funded through a partnership agreement valued at approximately £130,000 per annum. This does not cover the full cost of the service which Community First top up by means of a lottery grant and their reserves.

Local Good Neighbours work in rural areas to help people to connect with resources and services that will help them to remain independent within their community. Currently nine part time Local Good Neighbours deliver approximately 150 hours per week across the County.

The Care Act has given the Council a new duty to ensure all people benefit from access to information and advice, so a new approach is required to ensure we meet this new duty.

Proposal

Adult care Commissioners facilitated a series of workshops in each of the County's Area Boards asking older people what kind of services they felt should be available within their community. People wanted better information on what was available in the community and people to help them access support.

It has also been recognised that the services delivered by the Good Neighbours duplicated other community connecting services available across Wiltshire. Other services available in Wiltshire include befriending services delivered by Age UK volunteers which support approximately 4800 people a year.

Healthwatch Wiltshire are working in partnership with the Council to develop the information website "Your Care Your Support Wiltshire" which will help ensure people can find the information they need. Citizens Advice Bureau are also funded to provide a wide range of information and advice.

GP Care coordinators funded through the Better Care Plan are also available across the County making over 1000 contacts a month.

Based on this feedback and other events with older people and the voluntary sector it was decided that this responsibility should be devolved to the eighteen area boards and that the Good Neighbours service would no longer be provided through the current contracting arrangements. The budget of £130k will be distributed to the individual area boards in a proportionate way similar to other funding streams.

Some parts of County do not currently have access to good neighbours, so will benefit from having access to funds to allocate in this area.

In parallel to this, discussions with the voluntary sector will be taking place around how we can better target resources and improve information and advice to people. Healthwatch Wiltshire will help facilitate this discussion.

The new approach will build on the success of local youth networks and will establish a Health and Wellbeing group (HWG) in each area. These groups will include the newly appointed older peoples champion, commissioners, local members and other key representatives from the community.

It is proposed the groups will add to the functions relating to social inclusion and wellbeing previously provided by the Good Neighbours by making recommendations to the Community Area Board on how priorities for funding should be determined. It is anticipated that Health Watch will work with each Area Board to help identify local priorities and establish and support the new Groups.

What this means for Wiltshire Council and Communities

- Local people will be given a greater say in promoting wellbeing at a community level.
- Health and wellbeing groups will be able to work closely with Healthwatch, commissioners and other key stakeholders to establish local needs and priorities.
- Health and Wellbeing groups can respond to local challenges and make the best use of local assets including local knowledge, resources and voluntary organisations.
- Adult Care Community Commissioners can work closely with members, customers and key stakeholders to respond effectively to local needs while coordinating county wide solutions where required.
- The groups will promote links between universal services (including leisure and libraries) and services that support specific customer groups including older adults or those with a disability.
- It will provide opportunities to access external funds through grant funding and partnership working.

Further Information

For more information please contact Andrew Osborn at Andrew.osborn@wiltshire.gov.uk