

Report to	Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade Area Board
Date of Meeting	25/11/2020
Title of Report	Community Discussions - 'Impact of Covid 19'

Purpose of the report:

1. To provide an overview of recent community discussions held to focus on the local experience of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade Community Area.
2. To provide a source of information to help identify additional issues and help to inform the area board and its partners about current priorities within the community.

Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board Sept 30th 2020

Councillor Allison Bucknell introduced the discussion and reflected on the focus of the area board before Covid-19 at the start of 2020, including:

- Working with the RWB environment group to support eco-friendly projects and initiatives.
- Starting a new health and wellbeing group and starting to discuss and develop projects to address local issues.
- Developing youth provision in the community area, in partnership with town and parish councils.
- Starting to develop a Parish forum to discuss locally important issues.
- Ongoing focus on transport schemes via the Community Area Transport Group.

Cllr Bucknell also reported that new data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which was due to be considered by the area board on March 25th 2020 **had now been published by Wiltshire Council to inform local priorities:**

<https://www.wiltshireintelligence.org.uk/community-area/royal-wootton-bassett-cricklade/>

Key data was presented along with findings identified through the 'Our Community Matters' local survey conducted to provide a view of local perceptions of priorities to contrast with / complement the key data:

Much of this information would still be relevant but some may have changed as a result of Covid-19.

It was hoped that discussion at the meeting and in follow on work would help to assess the current state of the community area, identify additional issues and help to inform the area board and its partners about current priorities within the community.

Community Survey Results:

5 community identified priorities for RWB&C

- Highways infrastructure and maintenance 35.8%
- Anti-Social Behaviour and crime - 33.1%
- Waste and recycling - 31.8%
- Access to health-related services and activities - 27.6%
- Climate change and renewable areas - 25.6%

Source: Wiltshire Council "Your Local Priorities" survey data. Total number of respondents: 402 Note percentages refer to the percentage of respondents who chose that priority

JSNA key findings:

- Alcohol related hospital admissions higher than Wiltshire rate.
- Hospital admissions through self-harm notably higher than Wiltshire rate.
- 8% of 0-19yr olds thought to be living in poverty
- Only 13.4% of adult carers felt they had the social contact they'd like.
- Anti-Social Behaviour - 9 reports per 1000 compared to 14 per 1000 in the rest of Wiltshire.

Indicators were collected by a team of analysts from many organisations between October 2019 and February 2020

Councillor Bucknell explained that the Area Board had met informally throughout the lockdown period and had discussed their interest in understanding more fully the:

- Impact on Mental/Physical and Economic health of the local community.
- Many examples of support and friendship, which local people had offered to the whole community, their experiences and thoughts were felt to be a key to the way the community should move forward through the pandemic and onwards to recovery.

It was hoped that the development of an informal recovery plan might help the area board see how it can best support community action.

Everyone present was invited to participate in a discussion about their experiences around 3 questions; How was it? How is it? How will it be moving forward?

There was a lively discussion which highlighted a variety of local responses to the crisis, a whole range of challenges and positive outcomes:

Youth provision:

Detached (Street based) Youth work funded by Town & Parish Councils and the Area Board had been commissioned from the Rise Trust. These had taken place in RW Bassett, Cricklade and Purton. It was also hoped that an assessment of need in Lyneham and Bradenstoke could take place soon. This work emerged following the withdrawal of the previous youth provider at the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Local reports and perceptions of anti-social behaviour began to be reported alongside concerns about the impact of lockdown on the educational attainment, mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Children Centre:

Representatives of the Children's Centre reported that they were aware of a lot of issues impacting upon families during the crisis, specifically anxiety and mental health issues, concerns about access to food, home schooling and parental conflict. Problems had arisen as a result of a delay in food vouchers. There were concerns about fuel poverty as well as food poverty. In addition, lockdown and a requirement for home schooling, had also highlighted the existence of Internet poverty amongst many families in the community. The Children's Centre is delivering courses virtually but is concerned about getting messages out into the community so that they can reach out to new parents to let them know what they can offer.

GP Practices:

The Practice Manager from Tinkers Lane Surgery reported the expansion of access through the recruitment of additional GPs, and in order to try and plan additional capacity for mental health support, the recruitment of a community connector who will support isolating/vulnerable people from RW Bassett.

Tinkers Lane also planned to offer the delivery of flu jabs via a drive in 'Drive Flu Clinic'

Community Volunteers:

Representatives from Covid-19 Mutual Aid volunteer groups reported that demand for support has dropped off. This had previously been predominantly focussed upon shopping and prescriptions, however other concerns have been identified which prevail, including loneliness and links to professionals who can provide support and guidance in relation to adult social care. Groups also reported that they were grateful for the support from Wiltshire Council officers who maintained lines of communication and advice via the area board and Wellbeing Hub. It was felt that, if voluntary support was required again, groups would be able to step up quickly.

Libraries:

The RWB&C Library manager reported that RW Bassett library was now able to offer a limited service including internet access at the library. Mon – Weds, 10am – 1pm and 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 4pm on Fridays. The team was working hard to get Cricklade Library open again too.

Mind the Gap!

It was noted that some of the challenges, especially around the isolation of vulnerable people and the ability for some to access basics such as appropriate housing, food, clothing, fuel and information technology predate the Covid-19 pandemic, evident through the pre-existence of groups, initiatives and projects designed to address the various issues.

However, 2020 has amplified challenges making them more visible and of more importance to more people across the community area.

In addition, it was a concern that the number of local people who might be expected to struggle and experience unequal access to various basic requirements and opportunities is expected to grow as a result of the economic impact of Covid-19. The following provides details of the current issues identified at the area board community discussion which Members may feel require further consideration:

Food Poverty:

(ability to afford food and knowledge, skills and means to achieve a healthy diet).

Malmesbury Foodbank – covering Cricklade and parts of Purton
Swindon Food Collective – covering Royal Wootton Bassett and Purton
SHAROD (Swindon Holistic Association for Religious and Optimistic Development) – had been providing a variety of food and other social support to families across the Community Area.

The Children's centre - reported that local families had expressed gratitude to the local foodbanks during the Covid lockdown.

Tinkers Lane Surgery - offer to help arrange collections for the food bank.

IT poverty:

(Access to advice and guidance to facilitate digital literacy. The ability to afford appropriate equipment and adequate broadband).

Previous library support of computer use – especially related to applications for Universal Credit. Halted during the Covid lockdown, but gradually being reintroduced.

Fuel Poverty:

*(A household is said to be **fuel** poor if it has above-average energy costs, and if paying those costs would push it below the **poverty** line as far as its remaining income was concerned – issues that may exasperate fuel poverty may include – poor insulation, reliance on uneconomic appliances).*

Safe and Warm Wiltshire were not at the meeting, but it was noted that their initiatives link closely to this issue.

The RWB Environmental Group priorities also include improved home insulation and reduced fuel consumption.

Other Areas that were highlighted for further discussion and consideration:

- Access to Education and Training
- Access to Transport
- Access to social and cultural activities/combating social isolation and loneliness.

It was noted that some longstanding support organisations had not been able to provide full services during parts of the crisis and that some were still operating at a reduced level.

However, the whole community had learnt new ways to work together, new volunteer support groups (with new skills and ideas) have emerged across the area in different shapes and sizes to respond most appropriately (and vitally) to the individual needs of the locality they are serving.

They had also developed new ways of working together across organisation and group boundaries focussing more intently on the services they were delivering jointly and paying less regard to who had the biggest logo on the poster!

This discussion involved the following:

Wiltshire Cllrs: Allison Bucknell, Bob Jones, Mary Champion, Chris Hurst,

Rebecca Seymour (Celebrating Age), John Coole (Cricklade Foodbank), Sue Hughes (RWB Helpers, Town Council and LYN), Mark Clarke (Cricklade Town Council), Rob Noel (Tinkers Lane Surgery), Amy Dallimore (Army Welfare Service, Lyneham), Doug Downing (Wiltshire Police), Ray Thomas (Purton Parish Council), Danielle Blake (Rise Youth), Wayne Presley (D&W Fire and Rescue Service), Arindam Roy (SHAROD), Tony Cole (Link 16 / RWB Helpers), Mike Robertson (Lyneham & Bradenstoke Parish Council), Deb Skilton (Rise Trust Childrens Centre), Pat Hughes (resident and volunteer champion), Helen Gerrish (Swindon Food Collective), Angela Jensen (Cricklade Town Council and LYN), Rose Love (Lydiard Tregoz Parish Council).

Wiltshire Council officers: Frances Barrone (Local Area Coordinator), Kevin Fielding (Democratic Services Officer), Alison Killeen (RWB, Cricklade and Purton Library Manager), Sally Maynard Smith (Health Trainer), Jane Vaughan Community Engagement Manager).

Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Covid-19 Community Volunteers catch up 11th Nov 2020.

The following notes reflect the main points of discussion at this meeting of Covid-19 Mutual support groups and community volunteers:

Discussion about learning from the 1st lockdown:

Realisation that everyone had been learning and approaches developed as the crisis evolved.

Volunteer groups were happy to have cases referred to them by the wellbeing hub, but there had been some concerns about cases that were beyond the 3 strands of Shopping/Medicines/Friendly phone calls. There were referrals of people with Adult Social Care needs, once the Wellbeing Hub system changed to involve CEMs and LACs, communications with Adult social care improved.

All groups had re-evaluated the way they have worked previously, and some have scaled down the complexity of their previous operations and have reconnected with previous volunteers.

Some groups were still supporting some vulnerable people, but all reported that requirement has reduced, and it was noted that some people requiring support, probably pre-dated Covid.

Discussion about current status:

Groups reported that although the number of volunteers had reduced, it was felt that there were still enough people available to support the 3 strands of need in future (shopping/medicine/friendly calls). At the current time there has not been a significant increase in requests for help.

It was also noted that the Wiltshire Wellbeing Hub has not received significant rise in calls in the 2nd lockdown so far (more calls were related to half term free school meals).

There was also a discussion about the potential of a rise in new vulnerable families as a result of unemployment.

Discussion about the future:

Groups represented were happy to maintain contact locally, it was also noted that Wessex Community Action were helping to facilitate linking up Mutual Support groups across the County and had recently launched a new resource hub for anyone seeking information volunteering opportunities, community services, events and activities across the county

- <https://wiltshiretogether.org.uk/> .

The potential of future projects and actions were discussed, specifically:

- Development of appropriate digital literacy in older/vulnerable people who are currently not able to access appropriate equipment or learning opportunities.
- Social activities for older vulnerable people, especially those living alone – including transport.
- Future support of vulnerable individuals/families in providing access to food and medical needs.

Attendees:

Heather Ponting-Bather – Purton Outreach

Mark Clarke – Cricklade Town Council

Mike Robertson – Lyneham & Bradenstoke

James Shannon – RWB Helpers

Frances Barrone – Local Area Co-ordinator

Jane Vaughan – CEM

Apologies – Arindam Roy - SHAROD

Report Author:

Jane Vaughan - Community Engagement Manager

jane.vaughan@wiltshire.gov.uk