

Building Community Capacity - Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Briefing to Chesham and Chiltern Villages LAF - 19 October 2011

(The following report was due to be given at the LAF meeting but under the Chairman's direction due to lack of time it was agreed these notes would be attached to the minutes).

1. Background

As you know at the end of June this year the LAF agreed to allocate £5000 to a Building Community Capacity Project through the Local Communities Budget to support the current Chesham project and to develop activities to support older and vulnerable adults in a rural community i.e. Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish and its environs.

The £5000 provides for the resource of a project manager, Maggi MacKerron based at Chiltern DC who has been providing support to both local community teams.

As I was not able to be present at the June meeting, firstly can take this opportunity to thank the Forum for agreeing to support this project.

2. Activity since LAF meeting in June

A briefing meeting took place in July involving the Parish Council, Local County Councillor and Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being Tricia Birchley, Project Manager Maggi MacKerron, and an invited group of parishioners who had experience in providing voluntary support in the local community.

A range of issues which could impact on vulnerable adults were discussed and from this a smaller number of initial priorities identified.

- a. Organise a volunteer 4x4 vehicle support for those unable to get to urgent appointments or stranded by extreme weather conditions;
- b. Investigate if the lack of public transport impacting on those without cars or no longer able to drive could be mitigated through a local volunteer car scheme;
- c. Encourage more neighbour contact for those in the community 'isolated', physically or socially due to health issues, bereavement etc;
- d. Provide advice service or 'clinics' for residents unable to access internet or travel to towns in such areas as: social services, housing, health, financial, consumer, safety, technology, etc;
- e. Expand number of volunteers and carers use email network to provide support; share advice on public services or useful information for those they are helping.

On 1st September a launch meeting was held with a larger group of local residents with experience of providing support to local people and also those with particular skills (e.g. IT and publicity). Our neighbourhood Police Constable Kevin Flint also attended to advise on how the police could support the project.

The outcome of this meeting was the identification of a number of actions divided into short and medium term.

3. Actions

a. Short Term actions

- i. Communicate to the whole community through the parish-wide Magazine to publicise and seek involvement of more volunteers – **Actioned 25th September**
- ii. Create a email discussion group for volunteers – **Actioned 1st October**
- iii. Initiate contingency plans for a volunteer-led 4x4 car scheme to deal with extreme weather conditions this winter so parishioners can get to urgent appointments or home, if stranded at local towns/stations – **Actioned October**
- iv. Set up a ‘not for profit’ body to administer grants, obtain volunteer insurance, bank account, telephone number etc – **to be implemented by mid November**
- v. Directory of vital and useful contacts numbers – **to be published 1st December**

b. Medium term actions

- i. Develop existing arrangements for outreach to residents who are isolated by identifying or surveying who might need support, and make it easier for them to make contact, seek company through social events, or offering regular visits;
- ii. Organise one or more ‘workshops’ for the whole community on topics identified as priorities such as personal/ property security; consumer concerns; health provision; social services etc;
- iii. Pick up on other national initiatives including those which seek volunteers to assist implementation at local level. For example, the Chiltern Community Transport Hub or the Digital Switchover in April 2012;
- iv. If demand exists either develop a volunteer car scheme or associate with existing community car arrangements;
- v. Seek additional sources of funding to support initiatives;
- vi. Undertake presentations to neighbouring parishes about the project.

4. 4x4 transport Extreme Weather Scheme

Given it is already October we have progressed this item quickly. A meeting was held on 11th October to hear about the Chesham ChAV scheme and decide whether to set up a local arrangement. Alison Pirouet Chiltern District and Chesham Town Councillor provided a very pragmatic presentation on the Chesham Scheme which provided an excellent basis for the discussion which followed and led to agreement that a ‘Not for Profit’ management body be formed to administer its operation.

The management body is currently been worked up: a constitution is being drafted, budget requirements identified, securing funding of circa £500, public liability insurance sought, 0800 contact number acquired, and most important attracting further volunteers with 4x4 vehicles etc.

5. Briefing to other Parish Councils

One of the objectives of the project is to identify how activities might be expanded to, or repeated in, other rural communities. Enquiries from Parish Councils who would like to hear about initiatives and ‘lessons learnt’ would be welcomed.

Chris Brown

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