



Community Action Group

28th September 2015 10:00am

RCCE Offices, Threshelfords Business Park, Feering CO5 9SE

Present:

Cannon John Brown	JB
Ken Edwards	KE
David Eniffer	DE
Suzanne Harris	SH
Cllr Sheila Jackman	SJ
Lizzie Rose	LR
Chris Rust	CR
Tony Shelton	TS

Guest Speakers

Brian Goodwin	BG
Matt Thubron	MT

1. Apologies

Joy Darby, Rachel Fahie, Andrew James, Lorraine Jarvis, Robin King and Philip Wilson

2. Matters Arising

- Accuracy – Agreed
- Matters Arising

TS – Questioned how 'Healthwatch' make themselves known to the public? How do they publicise their services?

TS – Also questioned if Healthwatch are aware of the current Bus Service consultation where services are actually threatened impacting on those that are vulnerable in rural areas. Will Healthwatch address this matter?

KE – Stated that Healthwatch have made efforts to publicise their services.

SJ – Also added that Parishes and town councils have not been made aware of Healthwatch.
It needs to be known that it is a free service and therefore it was decided that parishes and town councils should receive information regarding Healthwatch.

SH- stated that the role of Healthwatch is research and therefore their awareness campaigns will only focus on the people involved at that given time. Healthwatch reach out to the people who can assist with their research and therefore publicity will target that particular sector only.

JB – asked can we help with the bus service situation?

SH – Stated that local people have been given the opportunity to have their say regarding the bus services.

KE – Added that decisions have been made regarding proposals.

CR – Also stated that districts and councils were also consulted at that stage.

JB – Questioned if Healthwatch have a role to play with the bus service situation?

TS – There are a number of contacts within the ERP group and a more proactive role needs to be taken to push this forward and let people know that the ERP cares and will help with the transport issue.

SH – The consultation is open until 21st October 2015 the ERP meeting is after this date however we will publish information on our next bulletin and also the website

Action LR

LEADER

SH – The aim for LEADER to be active by October, Defra have delayed the process somewhat due to database training to be completed. The database cannot be accessed until this training has been done and Defra have provided it.

SJ – Requested information about LEADER

Action SH

It was also explained that Essex County Council (ECC) are producing a general information leaflet for Essex to explain what is available under the LEADER scheme available and also the areas it covers.

The main aim of the scheme is to promote Economic development and encouraging employment. Targets do need to be met by us therefore the choice of grants accepted and are successful will in turn need to assist in meeting these targets

TS – Cross border action groups how successful have they been?

SH – All four bids covering Essex were successful so the majority of Essex is covered.

The overall success rate of the current LEADER scheme will be available in approximately twelve months.

KS – As a guide the European website evaluations from previous rounds are available to show previous rounds and their success and examples of projects.

SH – Suggested using Google and Eastern Plateau to see examples for local Essex or Herts.
(To be used as examples only).

3. Brian Goodwin – Community Agents Update

Power Point presentation available 'What have we done so far?'

– please note this is strictly confidential and only for use within the CAG members group.

Following an internal review for the last year Brian discussed the progress Community Agents have made within the community and also financial savings for the council.

Set out with 4 vision statements

1st vision - Support Older People

Focussing on living on their own and also own a home or rent.

New client demand

Christmas a busy time as families join together and encourage family members to seek help.

Also June but Social Care had a back log.

Quality Vs Quantity – but want to close off cases.

2nd vision – Needs Driven

Independent living a key area, to assist people by helping them remain in their own homes by supporting their needs.

3rd vision - People Centred

Help a person with confidence and setting their own goals to support independent living.

Approx 70% are being successful in achieving what they want as a person and not being forced.

4th vision - Working together

Helping those who are in more long term situations.

Small percentages are being returned to social care but only in extreme cases where the people require that service.

What next: Target is 400 clients per month this is the number CA can deal with.

It must be recognised that CA's are not social.

Questions:

KS – Community Agents (CA) cover the whole of ESSEX is there a difference between rural and Urban of Essex regarding greater needs?

BG – The need has been recognised as more urban and this may be due to people relocating to be closer to support and facilities for ease of use, and avoiding isolation. We could do some mapping to look into the rural locations and the need.

KS- Rural do have added problems of isolation, access etc.

BG – No difference all will be seen if required.

SJ – Advertising of CA not seen any – is this because of being overwhelmed with applications?

BG – Yes we do not have the resources to publicise CA's fully, however we are talking to Parish Councils and will send info out shortly.

Awareness from other organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch who have been the eyes and ears for their community. We have been contacted if they see cases that need attention.

Also local people such as neighbours have also contacted CA's and made a call into us on others people's behalf.

There is no media attention due to limited resources available but we do advertise in local parish magazines.

CH – Will local agents be undertaking the social prescribing training?

BG – Yes – we think CA's are a tool that the social prescribers will need to use.

It will be done in an independent friendly way within the client's own home.

TS – Village agents some use free time to transport locals to appointments, clinics etc

If not available it is missed. I am conscious that rural communities are remembered, is there a way that this can be addressed.

BG- CAs will go and see anyone assess their needs and try to support.

JB – They should get in touch with the CAs members of the community.

BG – We can provide posters and leaflets just ask.

DE – Social Inclusion and volunteering – contact CAs and Social Care

The Red Cross is one of the CA's partners but are struggling to recruit volunteers.

Currently looking into support workers in certain areas and be paid for a period of time to encourage people to get involved.

SJ – Village Churches – use to spread the word. Sheila is involved with the Rural Issues Group (all clergy) and has offered to speak with them regarding CA's.

BG – We do try with churches and have some really good relationships.

4. Matt Thubron – National Trading Standards Illegal Money Lending Team

Subject: Loan Sharks

Facts:

- 350,000 household affected by loan sharks – mostly in areas of high deprivation across the country is very much and estimate.
- Key piece of legislation: for anyone wanting to loan money cannot have a licence if you have a criminal record.

- To lend money an organisation by law have to provide guidelines and a contract, this is to protect the consumer but also themselves. If the money is not paid back then court proceedings can be put in place to obtain the money back.
- Loan sharks do not provide guidelines and contracts, therefore the court cannot be used to enforce the law for either party.
- Instead Criminal activity is the most commonly used to ensure payment of debt. Such as threats, shaming and isolating tactics. Borrowers who are vulnerable are perfect for loan sharks, who are capable of portraying themselves in many forms and are usually members of the same community and know when to choose their victims, timing and locations i.e. the school gate is a common one.
- It is recognised that 20% are female loan sharks

The team battling Loan Sharks have the ability to take on the whole prosecution and see it through, by using their use own investigators, two police officers with power of arrest and also own legal team. It's a national team.

With a 24 hr helpline open to the public/anyone can use.

More investigations are processed via referrals from agencies such as the police or housing rather than the hotline. Training within all relevant organisations helps with making referral's, once a referral has been made then the team can investigate and see if they can help.

Key is the support put in place for victims, even if the loan shark cannot be prosecuted. Try to give victims help who become witnesses, but we will still proceed with or without. We try and to gain evidence to check that loan sharks do not have a licence, and a warrant will be obtained to search the loan sharks address. Idea we search for a big book listing all the people who have borrowed money.

Risk assessment is always done and also some families need to be placed in witness protection not ideal but required as the needs of the victim. Try to address the financial, health issues and other issues to allow the victims to move on from a loan shark.

We introduce credit unions for people to use providing a viable option and therefore removing the problem of the loan shark.

Looking to seize 30 million most goes back to the treasury and a small amount goes back to the team to help with future.

If someone is vulnerable and has financial needs then this is an agency that can help.

Questions:

PW – Re: Essex do you work under ECC?

MT - Trading Standards will sign a protocol to ask Birmingham Trading Standards team to tackle problems in Essex.

Any differences between rural and urban?

MT – More challenging in the rural areas, most common areas are the larger ones such as towns Harlow and Basildon.

Isolation in the rural areas is more concerning as it's easier to hide. It is much harder to pick up on. People feel closer to their communities and are less likely to move away.

Encourage local authorities to have a week of awareness by signing police, housing agencies and etc and engage the press to get the publicity out.

Rural areas can use parishes, churches and there is a need to develop a model that can be used widespread to help those in these areas.

JB- Need to raise awareness.

SJ – Who funds you?

MT – FIS

PW -

A friend lends to a friend and then again, no discussion of financial matters or you see someone answering the door to a loan shark

DE – Benefit changes has this had an effect?

MT – Embedded in communities and has always happened generations.

Jaywick an example

TS- How effective are the FCA

MT -Trading standards needs to improve.

Like any public sector service we are subject to cuts but the service will not be removed I think the aim is to get permanent funding. And we have been going 10 yrs.

KS – is there a gap in the market regarding what the current licenced lenders are willing to do?

MT – Credit union looked at this to provide a relief to replace loan sharks.

Such companies such as 'Wonga' are now capped ---- can only get back double the amount now.

There is a demand to help.

Use of mosaic mapping – A large case in Stoke on Trent involved 1500 victims used mosaic mapping which highlighted three types of person and New Market came up under this loan shark.

PW – Possible link to gambling ?

MT – Yes betting shops are popular.

JB- ERP topic required and credit unions – ERP all about rural communities and we would appreciate a talk and help advise.

5) Essex Rural Strategy Update SH

The survey is now live as of 28th September 2015

It is the public consultation element of research leading up to a new Rural Strategy, which is hoped to be launched in early 2016. The aim is to get as many responses as possible to ensure that the new Strategy is well-informed of people's needs and views. The questionnaire can be completed on line and should take approximately 10 minutes.

The questionnaire can be accessed at this website:

<http://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/EssexRuralStrategy>

The questionnaire will be live for 10 weeks, closing on 4th December. It is open to be completed by anyone – as an individual, on behalf of a business, or on behalf of an organisation (a Council, a club, an association, etc).

All members are encouraged to complete the questionnaire themselves and also to circulate and promote it.

6) Forthcoming Events & Round Table Information Sharing

DE – Volunteer Essex – 'Do It' website taken over but hasn't worked as well as we hoped and now we have V E website and commissioned direct. Postcode directed to their local volunteer centre.

TS – Age Concern – Cuts brought in on council services is a struggle it is most important and try and find other ways to fund it but we are not the only ones. Everyone should be talking and duplication is occurring unnecessarily need to be left to AGE UK to deal with the issues.

Close cooperation between admin and others trying to prevent duplication. Delivered a good service and doing the best we can with the resources available. Isolation is such a problem in rural areas no bus services no other alternatives.

JB – Community Awareness is required in these areas.

KS – Galleywood has set up a good neighbour's group, asked for list to choose items to do something about

Community Ideas and already in place

- Message in a bottle scheme
- Quarterly event calendar
- Regular coffee morning
- Hints and tips on how to be a better neighbour
- Men's shed

Developing community awareness

CR – Social Prescribing - funding already taken a cut.

Alcohol and drug advisory service on the road scheme set up
Park Run in Maldon set up a junior park run for 4 – 14 yr olds
Need more funding for Yrs 2&3

CVS representative

Date of next meeting tbc