

Notes from the meeting of the Bickleigh Parish Council Community Engagement Working Group Meeting on Thursday 29th October 2020

Present: Councillors Wendy Haymes, Lynn Tamsett-White and Simon Rundell

1. Councillors agreed the following Terms of Reference for the Working Group and these will be put to the PC for approval:

The WG will take the agreed aims from the Priority Setting Meetings about External Communications and draft a strategy for the PC to communicate with its residents. They will provide updates to the Council at its monthly meetings and will present the draft to councillors for approval.

2. Councillors discussed the most recent community support programme that was set up during the Coronavirus lockdown and what the possibilities were for it to continue. The following points were made:

The idea of a community support programme had started as a response to the Coronavirus lockdown. Councillors had contacted residents and set up a spreadsheet of information listing those people who were in need of help and those who could provide it. Councillor Haymes has recently contacted those people on the list as volunteers and a few would still like to continue if needed. It was noted that there have not been any requests for help from the list so there does not appear to be a need at present. However, it was felt that it would be nice to keep in touch with those people who are still willing to volunteer and be involved. If the area is moved into a higher Tier under Covid rules then the volunteer list may still be needed. If so, this could be advertised via the Parish Council noticeboards.

Councillors all agreed that, post lockdown, they would be interested in how they could continue to help the community if there is a need. However, this is potentially a large task and there is not the capacity solely within the PC to support this and it could be in the form of signposting instead or a directory. A variety of needs were expressed during lockdown such as shopping, collecting medicines, social interaction, phone support and dog walking.

There was agreement that the PC still does not have a good communications mechanism by which to contact the community and find out what they want or need. The idea of a leaflet to make initial contact was liked.

The lockdown initiative was an emergency response to an unusual situation. If we take this on in normal life then that places a burden of responsibility on the PC and safeguarding applies, which would make this unsustainable. Volunteers might not want to undertake DBS checks and the cost of those would need to be borne by someone, probably the PC. Also, if any such scheme needs to be administered on a daily basis then this might also not be sustainable for the PC.

Councillors discussed the idea of Asset Based Community Development, which is about building on the assets that are found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. This makes a difference from an approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. They all agreed that this would be a model they would like to find out more about.

Councillors also discussed the possibilities of holding some training to help with creating a communications plan for the PC. The Clerk had recently attended some interesting and informative training provided through DALC about how to create a communications strategy and it was agreed to find out more about the possibility of a training session for all councillors. The PC would like to find out what the community needs and training would be a sensible and worthwhile use of the training budget in order to do this.

It was agreed that the Woolwell Centre is a key asset to the community and is central to improving communications with residents.

Recommendations

- To organise training for councillors to help them to create an effective strategy for communicating with the community.
- To gain an understanding of Asset Based Community Development.