



MINUTES

Community Focus Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Thursday, 22 June 2023
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Vince Settle (Chairman) Councillor Frank Andrews (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Peter Antony, Damian Buckley, Edward Collins, Martin Evans, Gail Goodman JP, Paul Hodgson, John Kirkham, Viv Willder, Michael Withers
Other Councillors Present:	
Officers Present:	Tracy Manning, Edyta Paxton, Katharine McDonnell
Other Attendees:	Zoe Wiggins (Age UK Lancashire), Natalie Reeves (Fylde Citizens Advice)

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. No interests were declared on this occasion.

2. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Viv Willder substituted for Councillor Gavin Harrison.

3. Age UK Lancashire – Annual Report

Zoe Wiggins, Age Lancashire UK, Information and Service Advice Officer, presented the Annual Report from Age UK Lancashire. She explained that there was a Service Level Agreement in place with Age UK Lancashire to provide an information and advice service in Fylde. As part of the agreement, Age UK provided a report to committee each year, summarising its performance over the previous year.

She advised that 40 Fylde residents had received full welfare benefit checks and a further 74 clients were supported with completing claims forms. With the charity's help around £420k of benefits had been claimed.

Zoe further advised that many clients would come for one service but usually use another get more. So in addition to accessing the information and advice service, clients may also use the hospital aftercare service, the Veterans service, Good Day Call which alleviated loneliness, the home help service, and the scams awareness project.

She advised that the funding from the council made a huge difference, which was very much appreciated by both staff and clients. The funding enabled the team to be open on a Monday and Tuesday mornings for drop ins, provide face to face or telephone appointments during the rest of the week.

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Members of the committee asked for more details about the scam awareness project, with Zoe advising that it was a two-year project delivered by an ex-police officer, mostly through home visits, which allowed the session to be tailored to the needs of the client. Some groups sessions had also been run, and the scam awareness was offered as part of the digital inclusion service also offered by Age UK Lancashire.

Zoe provided an example of the success of the project, with one client, who had just been scammed for £30k and the team managed to recover the money for the client. The local banks have also invited the officer in to provide scam awareness for customers.

Members of the committee were also interested in the Hospital After Care service and asked for more details. Zoe advised that the team were based at the hospital and liaised with staff on the wards. They would take patients home, ensure the client had food in the fridge, that the house was warm and that immediate needs were met. However the package was for up to six weeks, so working with the client, the team would put in place any longer term care that may be needed. The Hospital After Care Service also provided a similar service for clients, who had not been in hospital but had long term health issues. This included a home visit and assessment, together with appropriate support or other services being put in place.

The Chairman thanked Zoe Wiggins for her presentation and the committee RESOLVED to accept the report.

4. Citizens Advice Fylde - Annual Report 2022/2023

Natalie Traynor, Chief Officer, presented the Annual Report from Citizens Advice Fylde. She advised that Fylde Council was the funding body, through the provision of an annual grant, for the core Fylde Citizens Advice service, that is its telephone and face-to-face advice service.

Further, more specialist, services were provided by alternative funding streams. The services being ones that dealt with domestic abuse, advice following a cancer diagnosis, and the At Home service, advice provide in the homes of clients who were unable to attend the office due to caring responsibilities or due to ill health.

The committee asked where Citizens Advice was based, and Natalie advised that the office was in Kirkham, however a satellite service was provided in the Town Hall at St Annes on Wednesdays and Fridays. Additionally a dedicated Fylde telephone line was available, rather than residents having to be directed via the national helpline, and many residents also got in touch via email and the website.

The committee, having noted the difficulties the pandemic had caused in terms of recruiting volunteers, asked if the situation had improved. Natalie had advised that it had, with the volunteer profile changing from a cohort of mainly retired volunteers, to volunteers coming from more varied backgrounds, age groups and life stages. She advised that having recently attended a support group for Ukrainian refugees, three had volunteered to be trained for the advice service.

The Chairman thanked Natalie Traynor for her presentation and the committee RESOLVED to accept the report.

5. Community Projects Fund

Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive, presented a summary of the awards made during 2022/23 from the Community Projects Fund. She explained that Fylde Community Projects Funds awarded smaller grants of up to £300, and larger grants of between £300 to £2000 for groups which were based in Fylde or worked exclusively with people who live in the Borough. The fund supported projects which promoted or enhanced the environment, encouraged cohesive communities, or promoted the economy. £20k per annum was provided each year for the fund as a part of the annual budget setting process.

She advised there had been an underspend in the last financial year so members were being asked to promote the fund to their residents and groups in their communities. She further advised that the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) would provide a top up to the Community Projects for this financial year and the next, with criteria to access SPF to be finalised.

The committee RESOLVED to accept the report.

6. Household Support Fund

Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive, presented a report providing details of further government grant funding for Household Support.

She advised that this was the fourth round of Household Support Funding intended to support vulnerable households with essential goods and services in response to the cost-of-living crisis, especially those who may have missed out on support through previous rounds of funding.

The latest fund was a further £842 million pounds allocated to upper tier authorities to provide support in the period up to 31 March 2024. Of which Fylde Council had been notified, by Lancashire County Council (LCC), that it would receive a further £540,000 from the fund to support low-income families using similar approaches applied for the previous three rounds of Household Support Fund.

The funding was received using urgent decision-making powers due to there being no council meeting in proximity to the funding being received, and the urgency in passporting the funding to support residents.

The Chief Executive used his urgent decision-making powers, in consultation with the then Chairman of Environmental Health and Housing Committee together with the Leader of the Council, to prevent loss of continuity with the funding. Due to significant amount of funding the report was brought before committee in order for members to be appraised of the funding stream, and its use.

Edyta Paxton, Health and Wellbeing Officer, who administered the funding stream, advised that in addition to vulnerable people, the Council were also focusing on providing support to carers and care leavers. She advised that the Council was working closely with community and support groups to identify residents who may be in need of support. Two different initiatives being funded this time was a scheme called Community Cars, which provided transport to low income or isolated residents, and residents in rural areas. Additionally, the fund would be funding a Citizens Advice debit adviser to specifically visit rural communities and support vulnerable residents in those communities

In response to questions from the committee, Edyta advised that she worked closely with pastoral care staff in schools to identify students and families in need of support, but communication with schools generally was proving very difficult especially to reach those leaving care.

The committee RESOLVED to accept the report.

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