

Report to:	Scrutiny and Overview Committee - 25 February 2021
Lead Member:	Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Covid-19 Response Task and Finish Group Chair
Lead Officer:	Jay Clarke, Development Officer/Programme Manager

Scrutiny and Overview Committee Covid-19 Response Task and Finish Group

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to summarise the work undertaken by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's Covid-19 Response Task and Finish Group and to present the group's recommendations to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

Key Decision

2. No

Recommendations

3. Based on the findings of the work of the group, which is summarised later in this report, it is recommended that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee approves the following recommendations, and recommends these to Cabinet:

Recommendation 1 – The Council should ensure adequate resource is allocated for community recovery and to support parishes with further development of their community response/emergency plans, so they are as well-equipped as possible for any future crises.

Recommendation 2 – The Council should host an appreciation event to celebrate the success of the community response and to acknowledge the work of community groups and volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The task and finish group recognise the huge amount of work community groups and volunteers have delivered during this crisis. This event would celebrate and acknowledge the success of communities working together during the Covid-19 pandemic and the sense of solidarity and community that has sprung up all over South Cambridgeshire towns and villages.

The Task and Finish group also recognise that an in-person event can only be planned when an event could be safely held.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The recommendations have been drawn up by the task and finish group following analysis of the information gathered during a series of discussions. This has included discussions with representatives from South Cambridgeshire community groups who coordinated the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in their towns and villages. The task and finish group acknowledge that future community resilience and emergency preparation has been a focus of the Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, the Communities Team, and the Council's Leadership Team, and hope this recommendation helps build on the work in progress. Overall, the recommendations will support communities with their future recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic and acknowledge the work of South Cambridgeshire communities during the pandemic.

Details

5. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee agreed to set up a task and finish group initially to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on community facilities. Following the establishment of the group, this initial focus was widened and the group's Terms of Reference (**Appendix A**) were agreed by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at its December 2020 meeting. These set out the group's scope, which was to:
 - Review the community response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Review how good practice could be shared with other parishes in South Cambridgeshire.
 - Investigate how residents in South Cambridgeshire could be supported during the Covid-19 pandemic, to prevent isolation and loneliness, while adhering to social distancing guidelines.
6. Members of the task and finish group are:
 - Cllr Grenville Chamberlain (Chair)
 - Cllr Claire Daunton
 - Cllr Jose Hales
 - Cllr Judith Rippeth
 - The Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, Cllr Bill Handley, has participated in an advisory capacity
7. The task and finish group first met in November 2020 and was supported by officers from the Sustainable Communities & Wellbeing Team and Democratic Services.

8. The task and finish group undertook the following work:

- The group reviewed responses to a joint Planning Policy/Sustainable Communities survey of community facilities which was sent to all South Cambridgeshire parishes. On behalf of the task and finish group, officers included questions in the survey to gather information about how community facilities had been used in villages and towns as part of the community Covid-19 response, where these had been able to remain open. The group noted that the use of community facilities did not reflect the level of community response as not all community response activities had been delivered from community facilities.
- On behalf of the group, Sustainable Communities officers produced a newsletter providing advice to residents on how to keep well and tips and ideas on how to combat isolation and loneliness, particularly during the winter months with the prospect of further lockdowns. This was produced as a two-issue newsletter and the first issue was circulated to community groups and parishes for wider distribution to residents, just before Christmas 2020.
- On 22 January 2021 the task and finish group met with representatives from community groups in Cambourne, Coton, Fen Ditton, Girton, Histon and Impington, Melbourn and Papworth to hear about the representatives' experiences of coordinating the community response to the Covid-19 pandemic in their villages. They explained the initiatives they had put in place to support their communities. Between the groups, thousands of people across the district had been helped and supported through the pandemic. A summary of the different community initiatives and activities fed back from these six groups, is attached at **Appendix B**.
- The Task and Finish group found its meeting with community representatives extremely informative and members were extremely impressed by the considerable amount of work done by all the groups to support their communities. Community representatives informed the task and finish group that the community response had led to a sense of solidarity and community springing up all over South Cambridgeshire towns and villages and along with the community representatives, the task and finish group is keen that this is not lost after the pandemic. Looking ahead, the community representatives informed the task and finish group of activities they hoped to hold in the recovery period to help bring people together again, to help rebuild residents' confidence to get out again and to acknowledge and build on what had been achieved by the community response work.

Options

9. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee could:
 - Agree the recommendations with or without amendments and recommend them to Cabinet.
 - Refuse to agree the recommendations.

Implications

10. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

11. Potential cost implications of allocating resource to support parishes with the development of community response/emergency plans. Cost implications of hosting both the online and future in-person appreciation events.

Staffing

12. Potential staffing implications to allocate resource to support parishes with the development of community response/emergency plans.
Staffing implications relating to officer time to organise an appreciation event.

Health & Wellbeing

13. Community preparedness for the future is vital for the wellbeing of South Cambridgeshire residents during any future emergency/pandemic.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

A modern and caring Council

14. The implementation of the recommendations would support the Council's priority of being a modern and caring Council by supporting South Cambridgeshire communities during the recovery period from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appendices

Appendix A: Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

Appendix B: Summary of community response activities

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