

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE ON 6 OCT 2022
SUBJECT:	ARUN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT
LEAD OFFICER:	ROBIN WICKHAM, GROUP HEAD OF WELLBEING AND COMMUNITIES
LEAD MEMBER:	COUNCILLOR JACKY PENDLETON
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:	
IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF ARUN:	
Develop and implement a Wellbeing Strategy to plan services, resources, amenities, activities, and places to help our community thrive	
Work with key partners to ensure we deliver council wellbeing services complementary to their own, rather than duplicate effort	
Support the voluntary and community sector to provide services that help the most vulnerable in our community	
Provide infrastructure that supports wellbeing	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:	
Arun District Council will develop a Wellbeing Strategy to promote and support a multi-agency response to tackle the causes of health inequality in Arun's areas of greatest deprivation. Also work with partners to provide advice, support and activities that promote community wellbeing where it will have the greatest impact.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY:	
The Arun Community Engagement Project comprises of the following external funding for a two-year fixed period (January 2022 to December 2023).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contained Outbreak Management Funding• Safer Arun Partnership• Community Champions	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report seeks endorsement of the approach and aims of the Arun Community Engagement Project and provides summary information on the progress of the project to date.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.2. The Housing and Wellbeing Committee are recommended to endorse the approach and aims of the Arun Community Engagement Project as stated in paragraph 4.2.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. The Arun Community Engagement Project officially launched in April 2022. This report sets out the project's progress to date in the two delivery locations of Bersted Green Hub in Bognor Regis and in Chilgrove House Littlehampton.

3. DETAIL

- 4.1 The Arun Community Engagement Project comprises of a Senior Community Engagement Officer supported by two Community Engagement Officers who are based in community buildings owned by Arun District Council: Chilgrove House in Littlehampton and Bersted Green Hub in Bognor Regis. The project is incorporated into the work of the Wellbeing and Communities Team at Arun District Council, overseen by the Communities & Wellbeing Manager.

- 4.2 This project provides dedicated and accessible resources to actively engage with local communities in these areas of high need (they experience greater health inequalities compared to the wider Arun population) and, in essence, it is a community development locality approach. The broad aims of the project are:

- Build trusted relationships with these communities in order to understand their issues and concerns
- Mobilise partnership responses to address identified community issues working on the principles of a 'hand up not a hand out'
- Encourage and support safer, healthier and resilient communities through initiating and creating opportunities for social change in the identified areas
- Help and support these local communities to recover and reinvigorate from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and associated health inequalities (including wider social determinants of poor health i.e., social, cultural and economic)
- Provide a mechanism to encourage these communities and individuals within them to tackle health inequalities by taking up opportunities that support healthier lifestyles
- Generate new ideas and new ways of working with partners and the local community

- 4.3 The project team started in February 2022 and quickly set out to refresh and repurpose the two community buildings which had been dormant for some time due to the pandemic, so they were fit for purpose as community centres i.e., friendly and welcoming.

- 4.4 At Bersted Green Hub, over the course of two days, the internal building was repainted by volunteers from Osborne (the councils housing repairs and maintenance contractor) and veterans from Bognor Regis. Travis Perkins supplied the paint and painting equipment at no charge. Two sofas were donated by a local cancer charity.
- 4.5 At Chilgrove House, Tivoli (the councils parks contractor) worked onsite for four days clearing the rubbish, removing the old fencing and putting in new fencing for the outside area (contribution in kind) so the area was safe and usable. The councils parks department donated two bench seats with tables which Tivoli assembled. Osborne's provided three planters for the outside area, hanging baskets and plants. The United Church donated cups, saucers and plates.
- 4.6 At both centres, Nvrio (the councils cleaning contractor) cleaned the windows and undertook a deep clean prior to each launch open day, at nil charge.
- 4.7 A local cleaning company, Sussex External Cleaning services offered their services for free: at Bersted Green Hub they cleared and treated the moss from the paving slabs outside the entrance to the centre and at Chilgrove House, they cleared all the weeds and tidied up the areas outside the centre.
- 4.8 These partners were pivotal to helping with the successful launch events in April and the estimated in-kind value from these generous offers of help and support at both centres is equivalent to approximately £5,000.
- 4.9 A Bognor Regis company designed and installed new graphics for the front windows of both centres and signage for the external entrance to the Bersted Green Hub building to signify the hub was open. An employee of the company lives near to the Bersted Green Hub and wanted to make a local contribution to the relaunch of these centres.
- 4.10 Wifi has been installed at both centres. There are two computer terminals in both centres for anybody in the community to use, supporting and enabling digital access and inclusion in these areas.
- 4.11 The projects officially launched with a community open day event on Saturday 2 April 2022 at Bersted Green Hub and Saturday 9 April 2022 at Chilgrove House. These were well attended by members of the local community, partners and local councillors.
- 4.12 Partners who supported the launch events included: Cancer United, U3A, Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice, AgeUK, Aspire, Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester, Arun Wellbeing, Mind, Osbournes and Freedom Leisure.
- 4.13 A variety of activities were available at both centres including taster dance classes, painting and colouring competitions with prizes and a very popular raffle (sourced

at nil cost). Flowers and plants were donated by Marks & Spencer (through the foodshare initiative). Chilgrove House also had a local band. Both launch events were well received by the local community and partners alike, with numerous positive comments from local residents saying it was a happy and uplifting experience.

- 4.14 Following the successful launch days, the project team have proactively worked with the local community and partners to develop and deliver a variety of activities and opportunities for local residents to use the community centres.
- 4.15 The regular presence of the Community Engagement Officers, who are based at each centre, has been pivotal to building trusted relationships with local residents. Through talking to as many people as possible both at informal drop ins and whilst outside in the wider local community on regular walk-about, the officers have been asking people for their suggestions on what should happen at each of the centres. Initial ideas ranged from quizzes, bingo, singalongs, film afternoons and a homework club. There was a strong sense that people wanted to reconnect and meet with each other after the covid pandemic.
- 4.16 Early insight shows that residents who access the centres and consequently share their positive experiences with other community members i.e. word of mouth, has been an effective way to raise awareness and increase engagement with the centres. Complimenting this informal communication are dedicated Facebook pages for each centre, managed by the Community Engagement Officers: Chilgrove House – has approximately 250 followers and Bersted approximately 51 followers. This higher numbers for Chilgrove House could be indicative of younger age demographics living near to and involved with activities at Chilgrove House.
- 4.17 Currently, there are approximately 100 – 125 local residents per week who are using Bersted Green Hub and Chilgrove House to participate in activities and / or socialise with other local people from their area. Whilst there are shared aims between both centres e.g., improving health and wellbeing, the type of activities and opportunities to socialise are sometimes different in each hub, reflecting the demographic variation and associated needs in each local area. Each hub also welcomes residents to drop in for open tea and chat sessions: these have been instrumental to building relationships with wider members of the local community.

4.18 At Chilgrove House, regular activities include:

- Weekly Community fridge
- Chair Dance (average 20 participants)
- Street Dance (for children)
- School Uniform: secondhand donations are sourced via Morrisons (nominal charge or free). All proceeds go back to local schools.
- Children's arts/crafts/computer skills between 25 to 35 children
- Caterpillar baby group with parents

- Bingo
- 4.19 At Bersted Green Hub, regular activities include:
- Colouring/Knitting crafts
 - Chair Dance
 - Happy Feet (exercise)
 - New Age Curling
 - Bingo
 - Tai Chi
 - Family support including free food pop up
 - Caterpillar baby group with parents
 - Fish and chips or Pie and Mash lunch
- 4.20 Working with local partners is important to meeting the needs of each local community. The Arun Wellbeing team are co-located at both Bersted Green Hub and Chilgrove House, offering informal drop ins and delivering weight management courses. The Wellbeing team also give advice on healthy eating and cooking when the community fridge is at Chilgrove House, giving residents advice and confidence on how to make the most of the food available.
- 4.21 The community engagement team work closely with the councils housing team. Together with the Housing Resident Engagement Officer, they have helped with local estate clean ups and planting projects. The councils housing officer has bi-weekly coffee mornings at Bersted Green Hub for residents at Bersted Green Court.
- 4.22 Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice have sole use of Chilgrove House every Monday (at nil cost) to deliver advice and support for local residents. Uptake is good and it is anticipated access to this support will increase going into the winter e.g., rising energy costs.
- 4.23 Active Sussex have funded 26 weeks of free exercises classes at both centres which have had good take up from local residents. The Senior Community Engagement Officer ensured that 30 participants completed the course evaluation surveys. Active Sussex have visited Chilgrove House and after speaking with two community members involved in the classes, have invited them to join their conference at Brighton in September 2022 to share their own personal stories of their exercise journeys. This is a significant achievement in its own right as historically, participation in exercise classes is low within areas that experience higher health inequalities. The two residents are excited to join the conference and share their experiences for the benefit of others.
- 4.24 Following a conversation with the Head Teacher and Bersted Green Primary School who advised that many children were going hungry, the Senior

Community Engagement Officer has been facilitating food distribution to the school, supported by the Arun & Chichester Food Partnership Group.

- 4.25 The Senior Community Engagement Officer has increased local resident involvement in the Bersted Green Surgery Patient Participation Group through the inclusion of four new community members. These residents will participate in bi-monthly meetings, contributing their patient voice and experience within the local primary care services.
- 4.26 The community engagement team have built relationships with local mental health services: at Bersted Green Hub, the local mental health centre (Bedale) will be co-located at the centre providing outreach appointments and at Chilgrove House, MIND will also be co-located as part of their community outreach programme. Having these services accessible within these local communities is vital to increasing community uptake and participation.
- 4.27 Both hubs are used for outside bookings and private hirers, increasing the variety of activities available at the hub and maximising their use for the local community.
- 4.28 A key successful project outcome to date has been bringing on board resident volunteers who are now actively involved in supporting each of the community centres. This has proven to have had significant personal positive effect for those volunteers and is central to embedding these centres as part of the community and the key principle of 'doing with, not doing to'. The case studies in **Appendix A** illustrate the positive impacts for the volunteers involved at each centre. These are a powerful testimony to the potential long term positive impacts of these projects as they continue to grow their reach and involvement in the wider community.
- 4.29 Going forward, each hub will have an action plan setting out the key outcomes and measurements to monitor and track progress against the desired aims and principles as set out in 4.2. Key to this will be incorporating the community consultation outputs from each area, facilitated by an external organisation working in partnership with the Community Engagement Team and project stakeholders / partners (community and voluntary sector, health, and West Sussex County Council). The community consultation results are due in autumn 2022.
- 4.30 Governance for this project spans two local partnerships: Safer Arun Partnership (funder) and Arun Local Community Network both chaired by Cllr Alison Cooper. Future updates will be provided to Arun District Council's Housing & Wellbeing Committee.
- 4.31 Councillors have a vital role in working and supporting local residents and communities in these areas and the team are keen to work with and alongside

members to successfully deliver the project outcomes and make a positive impact.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1. Consultation has not been undertaken in relation to this report.

5. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 5.1. Consideration of options / alternatives is not required in relation to this report.

6. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF CORPORATE SUPPORT/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1. There are no direct financial impacts on the above areas arising from this report at this time. However, the external funding for this project ends in December 2023. If external funding is neither continued nor replaced, the Council will have to fund the project from its own resources should it wish to continue the project. This will involve budget growth which would have to be considered in the agreed manner.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

8. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 8.1. When exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). Whilst the Council is not obliged to have a Community Engagement Project, such a project demonstrates a commitment to that duty.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 9.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

10. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 10.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

11. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 11.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

12.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

13.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

14. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

14.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

15. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

15.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

16. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

16.1. There are no direct impacts on the above areas arising from this report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix A

Volunteer Case Studies