



East Suffolk Community Partnership Board
Social Isolation and Loneliness in East Suffolk
December 8, 2022

Introduction and Background

1. Since the Community Partnerships were formed in 2019, Social Isolation and Loneliness has been the top priority for the Board and identified as a priority by seven of the eight individual Community Partnerships. The Board has invested in a number of projects to reduce isolation and loneliness in the district since 2019.

Loneliness and Isolation Workshop – 2022 Forum

2. At the Community Partnerships Forum at Trinity Park in March 2022, the Loneliness and Isolation workshop focussed on key data about the topic, including new data relating to loneliness during the pandemic. This data, along with the ideas generated at the workshop in response to four key questions (below), was presented to the Board at their September meeting.
3. The focus questions for the interactive part of the workshop were:
 1. What already exists in East Suffolk to reduce isolation and loneliness?
 2. What are the gaps – who and where?
 3. If you had no budget but willing partners, what would you do to support the groups and places identified?
 4. If you had a magic wand and unlimited budget, what would you do to support the groups and places identified?
4. Headline results from the workshop were summarised in a report on the Forum to the June Board meeting and considered in detail at the September meeting, with an opportunity for the Board members to consider any gaps/additional ideas and prioritise the solutions identified by the workshop delegates.
5. At that meeting Board members were also asked to consider participating in a Task and Finish Group to work up the priority ideas, however no volunteers were forthcoming.
6. The top five ideas from the Board votes were as follows:
 1. Community Hubs
 2. Address Transport issues
 3. Designing solutions with communities building on local assets

4. Communication – about what is already available
 5. Learning from others and capacity building
7. Since the September Board meeting, the Government has announced a new stream of capital funding linked to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSP) – the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). A priority for this fund is developing community facilities and hubs, including investment and support for digital infrastructure and circular economy projects in local community facilities.
8. It is therefore proposed that we should try to combine East Suffolk CPB revenue funding and Rural England Prosperity Fund programme capital funding to develop a competitive grant scheme aimed at enabling, developing and supporting community hubs in and serving rural communities. This scheme would bridge business and community needs and provides critical upgrades and improvements to community facilities, so they are fit for modern day, 21st century use.

Outcome Proposal

9. The outcome proposal attached as Appendix A to this report outlines the proposed approach but is subject to further development once additional details about the REPF are available from Government. East Suffolk Council had to submit its proposed addendum to the UKSP proposal by 30th November.
10. The proposed approach is outlined in detail in the outcome proposal but essentially is about undertaking a pre-REPF stage which utilised some existing funding carried over from East Suffolk Partnership (ESP) days and ring-fenced for business planning support to VCSE organisations. REPF capital funding and Community Partnership Board revenue funding would then be combined to create a package of support for community facilities that brings together a range of community connection, business and net zero ambitions.
11. The ESP funding for business planning would be used to provide one to one support to interested facilities and businesses, encouraging them to consider the range of options open to them in terms of creating a 21st century community hub. These include:
 - Improved digital infrastructure to enable use of the space as a digital hub by local residents and businesses
 - Improved kitchen facilities to enable provision of meals e.g. for a lunch club or cook and share session, use as a Meet Up Monday or for Cooking on a Budget classes
 - Building extensions (or adaptations to existing rooms/space to repurpose it) to provide additional space for a community shop or pantry, outreach services to visit (for example health, money or housing outreach from public or voluntary sector organisations), a digital hub, as a co-working space or health and wellbeing activities
 - Additional space for circular economic projects e.g. Men’s Shed or Makers Shed
 - Changes to enable use as a cultural, arts, heritage or events space
 - Adaptations to outside space e.g. development of a community growing space or green gym
 - Installation of EV chargers
 - Net zero upgrades to improve energy efficiency of buildings

- Supporting village halls to help the hyper local economy, local activism etc
12. It is intended that this funding will specifically be used in smaller market towns and rural communities in line with the REPF ambitions. Developing an enhanced network of community hubs across East Suffolk should play a key role in addressing the first (community hubs) and third (designing solutions with communities building on local assets) of the priorities identified by the Board at/following the last meeting.
 13. Conversations are underway with the Transport and Travel Task and Finish Group about opportunities to ensure that community hubs funded through this programme are accessible, including through Demand Responsive Transport.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1) Note the priority ideas identified through the September Board meeting (and subsequent survey) for reducing isolation and loneliness in East Suffolk**
- 2) Approve the outcome proposal attached as Appendix A to this report and allocate £45,000 from the 2022/23 budget and commit a further £70,000 from the 2023/24 budget**
- 3) Receive an update report at the March 2023 Board meeting**

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