

Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and surrounding villages Community Partnership

Summary

At our recent Community Partnership meeting on 20th September, we received the feedback from a priorities survey which ran over the summer. This was to gauge opinions on both the Community Partnership priorities and on how the Community Partnership is working.

One of the themes which came up in response to a question in the survey about what the emergent priorities are was around the cost of living and living standards. Specifics were raised about utility bills, the Universal Credit uplift change and knowledge about making healthy meals on a budget.

At the meeting on 20th September, the findings of the survey were discussed. It was highlighted that the cost of living is especially pertinent at present with energy and fuel price rises and it was agreed to refer this to the Community Partnership Board as this issue transcends one Community Partnership and is likely to impact all eight

Since the meeting and in light of panic buying of fuel, an informal survey was carried out with parish councils about heating energy supply for their villages. This was because with petrol/diesel price rises as well, some residents in rural parts of the patch may have been affected by a double energy price rise (increase in heating fuel price and petrol/diesel). The survey found that most rural villages are served by heating oil and wood with a patchy supply of gas. One response noted that the price of heating oil has doubled in less than three months.

Also discussed at the meeting was about a further challenge for the finances of some families which is transport to education. It was observed by one member of the Community Partnership that they work with families who live in a rural area and have limited school options because of transport. This is a Suffolk County Council issue, however poses an additional challenge for some families who are already facing rising costs of living. It was agreed that this would be mentioned to the Community Partnership board as this is a contextual factor that is affecting some families.

This summary sets out the discussion that took place and helps to provide insight about what was been presented to and discussed at the most recent Community Partnership meeting. The Community Partnership decided it would be best practice to refer these issues to Board level so this can be considered more widely and so that other experiences from elsewhere in the district can be discussed and added to experiences expressed in Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and the surrounding villages.