

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the Conference Room, Riverside, on  
**Thursday, 17 February 2022 at 6.30pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Geoff Lynch

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith

**Officers present:** Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Peter Langford (District Emergency Planning Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities) and Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager).

**Others present:** Chris Abraham (CAS), Maddie Baker-Woods (Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG) and Ben Hogston (Norfolk & Waveney CCG).

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**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillors Back, Cloke, Deacon, Green, Robinson and Topping. Councillors Byatt and Cooper attended as substitutes for Councillors Deacon and Robinson respectively.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3 Review of Covid-19**

Councillor Rudd, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health and Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism gave a brief introduction to their report ES/1058.

Peter Langford, the District Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO) explained that Community Emergency Planning fell within the remit of the Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) and was an initiative set up in the mid 2000's. He added that it had been given impetus before the pandemic by a Lottery Fund grant which enabled it to be extended into communities. The Committee noted that it was largely based on Town and Parish Councils who formed a pool of volunteers which the JEPU could then communicate with in the event of an incident or emergency. The Parish Council would

then generally have a plan on what they were going to do and they, as well as other community volunteers, would support the emergency services. The DEPO stressed that volunteers were not asked to respond to the incident directly but the JEPUs could use their village halls and community centres to house evacuees, as well as use their local knowledge on who was the most vulnerable in their community. The DEPO explained that the JEPUs had communicated with volunteers directly at the start of the pandemic but then the Collaborative Communities Board had communicated with them. Now we were in the Covid recovery phase, the JEPUs were contacting volunteers directly again eg Storms Dudley and Eunice messages had been sent directly through Emergency Planning Groups. He added that the team currently communicated with around 57 groups in East Suffolk and, of these, 44 had a plan with emergency contact details that were reviewed annually. The remainder might be thinking of having a plan or be a group that previously had a plan but the volunteers had moved on.

Councillor Beavan queried if it was possible to build on community resilience amongst vulnerable people in their accommodation. The DEPO responded that the JEPUs focused on responding in an emergency and, whilst they did look at what resilience there was, this was not really the role of JEPUs. He added that they did work alongside partners who worked with those vulnerable people in the community and, although it would not be JEPUs doing it, they would like to tap into any community resilience and understand what that community resilience was.

Councillor Hedgley queried if every Parish Council had a designated emergency person and plan and if not was this what the JEPUs were aiming for. The DEPO responded that most did not and their biggest challenge was that someone left and enthusiasm for a plan dropped. He added that he would like to see every Town and Parish Council having a plan but he feared they were a long way off that. Councillor Hedgley queried if a statutory law that each Parish Council should have an emergency contact and plan would help. The DEPO explained that the Government was looking at reviewing emergency planning but he did not think they would get to a point where every Parish Council would be required to have a plan.

In response to the Chairman's request for clarification that not all 57 Community Emergency Planning Groups in East Suffolk had a plan, the DEPO stated that a lot of parishes had agreed to have a contact who could be contacted in an emergency and would cascade information out but that was different to having a plan.

Councillor Gooch referred to the map in the report and the DEPO clarified that it was easier to convince coastal parishes that had a direct threat to have a plan but it was more difficult to convince others. He explained that Lowestoft Town Council had agreed to have a plan but it was more difficult for them to create one because of the social dynamics of being a large town, whereas it was easier for parishes because everyone tended to identify with the area and the Parish Council. Councillor Gooch pointed out that, given the DEPO's comment, there appeared to be a large gap along coastal areas between Southwold and Lowestoft. The DEPO stated Southwold used to have an active emergency planning group but people moved on and the JEPUs were currently trying to reinvigorate Southwold volunteers with those in Reydon for a combined group and several had attended recent training.

Councillor Byatt queried how quickly data protection requirements were lifted in an emergency and the DEPO explained that, if an Emergency Incident was declared, all the agencies would come together to create a list so information would be shared, especially in relation to vulnerable residents. He added that one might occur this weekend due to the storms but if not then a large exercise would be held later in the year to practice. Councillor Byatt then queried what Councillors should do in an emergency and the DEPO responded that he and Councillor Rudd would be meeting shortly to discuss several matters including further training for Councillors.

Councillor Bird queried if parishes were too small a structure to deal with emergencies and the DEPO stressed that Parish Councils were not being asked to respond to emergencies but to provide additional support eg rest centres and working with emergency services when they arrived on the identification of vulnerable people.

Councillor Gooch stated that rest centre training had been offered to Members at a training session in 2019 but it had not taken place. The DEPO clarified that he had been suggesting an updated version of the 2019 My Role in an Emergency Councillor training, however, the first rest centre training for community planning groups and volunteers since Covid had been held this week and further sessions would be held later in the year if Councillors wanted to attend.

Councillor Hedgley stated that his parish had used the template and identified potential emergencies but he was concerned that a large town such as Woodbridge did not have a plan. The DEPO repeated that it was always more difficult for towns to create a plan due to the fact that volunteers did not always identify with the Town Council or some community groups identified with a particular issue in their area and did not always want to be moved under a Town or Parish Council.

The Chairman welcomed the invited guests to the meeting and firstly asked Chris Abraham, Chief Executive of Community Action Suffolk to give a brief introduction to the Voluntary Sector element of the report.

Chris reminded Members of the size and scope of the voluntary sector within East Suffolk and it was noted that there were over 6000 registered organisations such as charities and not for profit organisations, and many more unregistered groups totalling roughly 15,000 voluntary sector organisations in Suffolk. CAS had produced a state of the sector report in 2020 which detailed such things as the number of volunteers, turnover and the types of work they were involved in, and Chris explained that this would be refreshed in 2022 to understand more about the positive and negative impact that Covid had on the sector. She added that, throughout Covid, CAS had undertaken a number of surveys of the sector who initially had been really worried about financial sustainability because services were shut down and were not able to operate their activities, however, throughout the pandemic things changed and the outlook had become more positive due to business grants, the furlough scheme and other emergency and additional funding, including the funding East Suffolk Council had made available to those groups.

**Councillor Lynch arrived at 7.05pm.**

Chris continued that advice around funding and grants was not new as it had been available before the pandemic and she suggested that the level of groups now seeking funding was back at pre-pandemic levels. She stated that the surveys had also given an insight into the rapid digitalisation the sector had gone through with staff working from home, meeting clients and moving more generally to online services, however, it had become clear that there was a growing demand for their services and some individuals were presenting with much more complex needs. The key challenge for the voluntary sector was the number of volunteers not returning to the roles they had been doing before the pandemic which had resulted in some charity shops closing and some activities not fully restarting. The Committee was informed that a new volunteering brokerage website was available which, although still called Volunteer Suffolk, was now much more intuitive than the old website and volunteers could record information about their volunteering including hours, placements etc and volunteer managers could keep records such as DBS and training which enabled passporting of volunteers. Chris added that she thought it might now be the time to build confidence to share and passport volunteers amongst organisations. She stressed that the numbers in the report about organisations and individuals were just for East Suffolk. It was noted that, since June, 73 new organisations in East Suffolk had signed up as well as 107 new volunteers who resided in East Suffolk, although she stressed it was not possible to determine the number of those that lived outside East Suffolk who volunteered in East Suffolk.

Members noted that East Suffolk Officers had been very involved in developing the refreshed Volunteering Strategy which had been approved in July 2021 by the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board. Officers were now involved in the task and finish groups working on the key priorities around raising the profile of volunteers, supporting people to be more engaged in their communities and take up volunteering, and engaging employers and business leaders around employer supported volunteering to strengthen the relationship between the VCSE and the Business Sector.

Chris suggested that communities would not have got through the pandemic without volunteers, whether they be good neighbourly people, those who were community spirited and involved in the Home But Not Alone Scheme, providing shopping and medications and supporting the vaccination rollout. She explained that there were still calls for volunteers to help support the health and care sector due to difficulties recruiting staff into care roles and volunteers had helped with the urgent booster campaign just before Christmas. Chris suggested that the Scrutiny Committee might want to reflect on and consider the potential overuse of volunteers and the dependency on the goodwill of volunteers in the long run. She added that people would come out and respond in an emergency but she queried at what time/stage did it stop becoming an emergency. She stressed the need to use volunteers in the right way in the longer run.

Maddie Baker-Woods, Chief Operating Officer for Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG, began by thanking the Head of Communities for all the partnership work they had done together throughout this period. She endorsed Chris' comments that voluntary and community organisations and volunteers had played a vital, generous and sustained role in supporting the delivery of services and supporting staff in a true partnership throughout the pandemic. She gave a heartfelt public thank you to all the volunteers, and the people and organisations that had enabled that partnership approach which

had been very far reaching. She referred to the report which gave a number of examples of activities and programmes that had helped people to stay well mentally and physically and she pointed out that most of these had been within local communities. Maddie highlighted another set of partnerships with volunteers through the CCG's main providers eg GP practices through the Patient Participation Groups; in hospital through Red Cross Teams; the Ambulance Service through First Responders and the St Johns Ambulance; through User Groups such as Mental Health Trust volunteers who had called people and stayed in touch with them; through Pharmacies and the national scheme linked in with Home but not Alone. She referred to Chris' comment re sustainability and stressed that throughout the pandemic keeping patients, volunteers and staff safe had been their number one priority. A lot of this has been enabled through CAS through their very important work - being a focal point, registering interest and referring to workforce hubs, and supporting very efficient DBS checks. Maddie shared a case study from Leiston where the community and volunteers had been incredibly generous with their time, eg in wave 1 volunteers had worked with the Leiston practice to support a phlebotomy service which enabled a drive through service to be offered that kept people and staff safe and was a good example of partnership working especially through people from the Sizewell community and the Leiston practice. She added that volunteers had been crucial to the vaccination programme including working in car parks, supporting observation periods, making tea, as well as individuals coming back into nursing and medical roles. She confirmed that there had been similar examples in other communities and she repeated her thanks. Maddie referred to a very important point in the report about legacy and stressed the need to learn from volunteers, how they had felt supported, what had worked well and what could be done even better in the future.

Ben Hogston, Associate Director of Primary Care Networks (Great Yarmouth and Waveney) echoed the previous comments regarding the sustained effort throughout the last year and the sense of community, especially in vaccination centres, with communities getting involved and pulling together, as well as the partnership working. In terms of numbers, it was noted that 470 volunteers had given more than 28,500 hours of support across 50 vaccination sites across Norfolk and Waveney last year. Ben agreed with comments regarding sustainability and the need to discuss how to engage more volunteers and how to plan that together. He gave an example of really good engagement between the Lowestoft Primary Care Network and the Lowestoft Lions and explained that they were discussing how to take that forward. He concluded by thanking everyone involved.

Chris Abraham gave details of the Good Neighbour Scheme which had originally been started by the Rural Community Council and was an initiative mainly for rural parishes around getting volunteers together to support the more vulnerable to continue to live independently in their own homes by doing jobs such as cutting grass, changing light bulbs, getting shopping etc. It was noted that most schemes were very small involving a cohort of around 10-20 volunteers and they operated for less than £1000 a year which paid for insurance, DBS checks and a mobile. Chris stated that it had been a successful programme anyway but Covid had highlighted just how the Good Neighbour Schemes could really support people. She explained that a new Scheme Co-ordinator, Alice Sims, was now in post. She concluded that a few areas in East Suffolk were expressing an interest in the Scheme as several mutual aid groups set up during the pandemic were now looking to offer something more sustainable in the longer term.

Councillor Beavan expressed concern about the delay in using volunteers for the booster programme over the Christmas period, as well as the use of the Sir John Leman School as a vaccination centre, and he queried if more planning and preparedness was needed given it was likely another booster programme would be required. Ben acknowledged that it had been challenging given the short notice period given by the Government and that there had been a number of reasons for using the School which he felt had been successful. This included the need for the surgeries to continue with their normal work and that there had been a good number of volunteers including some from Southwold. He accepted the need to look for improvements and to see how it could be done better next time and it was hoped that guidance on the next booster would arrive in a more timely manner. Councillor Beavan commented that there was a Sports Pavilion on the Common in Southwold that would be a suitable venue and Ben agreed to contact him direct about the next booster rollout.

The Chairman queried if a lot of people were missing out because of digitalisation and Chris responded that there had been rapid digitalisation during the first lockdown because that was the only way charities could keep in contact with clients. She explained that many were now using a hybrid model and wanted to get to a place where nobody was excluded because of their access to digital technology or their ability to use it. She explained that CAS and the Digital Inclusion Network needed to think about how to improve the skills of voluntary and community organisations because not all of them were digitally adept at delivering services online, and members of the public needed to be supported too. She added that East Suffolk had done a lot of work eg the rollout of Grandpads, Digital Mentors and community champions to support people to access things online but moving forwards it was likely a hybrid option of online services and face to face would be needed.

Councillor Gooch queried if students were being encouraged to volunteer to share good practice and foster intergenerational volunteering. Chris stated that the Suffolk Volunteering Strategy included a priority to encourage 14-25 year olds to engage in volunteering. She explained that there was a need to think about innovative ways to encourage people to volunteer eg family volunteering which helped young people to understand the value of volunteering and a 2 year project with East Suffolk with funding from LIFT, which focussed on volunteering as a stepping stone into employment. She stressed the need to raise the profile of volunteering and get into schools and colleges to inspire young people to give their time.

Councillor Beavan referred to the unsuccessful Tribe app and suggested that an app could be really helpful eg 14 volunteers were active and on duty in Southwold which was a real resource that could be used. Chris commented that she was not sure how many referrals were being received but she and Nicole could take this back to the Collaborative Communities Board to discuss whether a volunteering app would be useful.

Councillor Lynch asked what one thing was not done that could have helped East Suffolk as a whole. Maddie stated that she felt the partnership with East Suffolk Council had been incredibly positive, helpful and sustained and she felt that was the reason they were able to work together due to the seeds that had been sown before the pandemic. She acknowledged the importance of reviewing and evaluating

everything including how each and every community across East Suffolk had been supported, in order to use the learning for the forward strategy.

Councillor Byatt asked for an update on the Volunteer Passport Scheme, Voice of a Friend and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme and he queried what Councillors could do to help. Chris responded that part of the Volunteering Strategy workstream was how to raise the profile of volunteers and she suggested Councillors could share information about and promote the Volunteers Week campaign from 1-7 June each year and Suffolk Action Week which encouraged people to look at volunteering opportunities in their area. In relation to the Volunteer Passport Scheme, Chris explained that a number of volunteers had completed their training eg Safeguarding and H&S and were now ready and on Volunteer Suffolk but she stressed the need for organisations and volunteers to be open to passporting this precious commodity.

The Chairman queried if all volunteers needed to have a DBS check and whether this could be a barrier for some potential volunteers. Chris responded that it was only those that were involved in regulated activity eg those deemed to be working with vulnerable children etc and unsupervised that required a DBS and she felt that, whilst it was a complicated area, it was not really a barrier because even if the check did show an offence it did not always preclude someone from volunteering. She stressed that DBS checks were only as good as the day they were done so managers should always take up references as well.

Councillor Cooper thanked everyone that volunteered in Leiston. Chris acknowledged that there was a really great Good Neighbour Scheme in Leiston. Councillor Lynch referred to Councillor Cooper's comments and asked if there was a way to recognise volunteers to thank them. Chris stated that it was really hard to recognise all the volunteers because there were so many of them. She referred to the "Suffolk Says Thanks" campaign which thanked everyone that helped their communities during the pandemic and whilst she agreed that a lot of people did not want to be thanked publicly, she suggested that everyone that had contributed could receive a written or verbal thank you, especially from the CCGs/PCNs.

The Chairman thanked the guest witnesses for their attendance and participation.

**The meeting adjourned at 7.53pm for a comfort break and resumed at 8pm.**

The Head of Communities gave a brief update on the Home But Not Alone Scheme which was set up in March 2020 to help residents to access food, medicines and other basic supplies, or who were feeling lonely/isolated. She explained that the current report focussed on what had happened since the last detailed report to this Committee. She added that, between November 2021 and January 2022, 264 referrals had been received with around 2/3rd of those being urgent, and there had been a further five referrals since 22 January 2022. Whilst there were currently low numbers of referrals from HBNA following a spike in January 2022, it was noted that the Communities Team were now receiving reports from other routes including Councillors, partner organisations and even through some Anti-Social Behaviour cases which were being investigated. She emphasised that these referrals were increasingly complex and urgent and the majority related to the cost of living increases and often included aspects around mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The Committee was informed that CAS had surveyed community groups throughout the pandemic but, in June 2021, the Collaborative Communities Board decided to do a further comprehensive survey to see how things had changed as a result of the pandemic in relation to the response groups across Suffolk. 56 East Suffolk groups had responded, 14 were mutual aid groups, 14 charities and 11 were Good Neighbour Schemes. It was noted that 93% were still active or paused and 80% had said they would help out in other emergencies eg fire or flood. 55% of groups said their volunteers might be interested in volunteering elsewhere but 24% said they wanted more volunteers for their own group. 25 groups had said that the most important thing they had learnt was that there were people in need who they had not been previously aware of. Since the survey, CAS had worked with a number of partners, including the Council, to undertake follow up work and details were in Section 2.3 of the report. This included supporting groups to convert to the Good Neighbour Scheme, providing support for mutual aid groups that did not want to become more formalised and also supporting volunteers who were interested in other opportunities.

The Committee's attention was drawn to paragraph 2.4 of the report detailing the wide range of groups the Council was still working with eg CAB, Salvation Army and new projects such as the Teapot Project. Reference was also made to paragraph 2.5 which gave details of how work was ongoing with local different community and voluntary groups to make food more sustainable eg four pantries in Lowestoft were being piloted where people paid a set amount per week to take a certain number of items from the pantry and also access donated food. Details were also given of the Lowestoft Thin Ice project, which provided a free hot meal and drink, and the new Boost Grants Programme to support communities to establish projects to help people get fit and active and access sustainable food.

The Head of Communities explained that the Community Partnership Board had established a Mental Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group which would report back to the March Board meeting and the Council had made funding available through a fifth Boost Grant theme to support mental health. In addition, the report gave details of Suffolk level projects eg the Warm Handover Scheme and the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme which included a new initiative run by CAS called PinkOrange that gave four free evening meals a week for four weeks and encouraged cooking as a family and eating healthily.

Councillor Coulam asked if the PinkOrange scheme would help children and families through the school holidays and the Head of Communities responded that there was a separate holiday activities fund programme that was Suffolk wide but from April 2022 the Council would be leading the commissioning of holiday fund activities across East Suffolk for children on free school meals. She added that the range of activities on offer would be broadened based on feedback from the programme last year eg that children had not had breakfast and that they were very tired. She concluded that the aim was to encourage children to try activities that they would not normally do.

Councillor Beavan referred to the fact that the CAB provided budget advice but as they were merging he queried if the Council could help. The Head of Communities reported that interviews were being held shortly for a Financial Inclusion Officer to complement some of the CAB work and it was noted that the post would work with non-Council



tenants as there was already an equivalent post in Housing working with tenants. She stated that it was clear the cost of living crisis was already impacting in that people were having to make choices between heating and eating and some could not afford to run their cars. She explained that a Corporate Management Team Sub-Group wanted to identify where the Council could help and influence eg help people to access money they were entitled to such as benefits and grants and help them to manage their money more effectively. She added that it was becoming clear that there was a group of people who could not read or write who were struggling to read information sent to them. She explained that the Council also wanted to do some preventative work for those people who were likely to tip into crisis point imminently as it was obvious that those who had just about been managing were no longer managing and were seeking help for the first time eg using food banks.

In response to the Chairman's query, the Head of Communities confirmed that anyone with financial difficulties would be signposted to the new Officer. She added that conversations were taking place at a Suffolk level regarding the future of HBNA and Suffolk Advice and Support Services (SASS) but the Council also wanted to act quickly at East Suffolk level because these problems were likely to increase in the next few months. The Chairman asked if both these services would be withdrawn at some point and where people would go after that. The Head of Communities confirmed that HBNA was set up as a direct response to the pandemic and stated that it was likely there would be something in place at Suffolk level but it was not known what that would look like yet. In relation to SASS, the funding had been extended for another six months and again it was not yet known what that would look like after that.

Councillor Lynch referred to problems some people had when applying for free school meals and he queried if there was a way the Council could help guide those people by linking with the schools. The Head of Communities confirmed that it was clear some people did have problems making claims not only for free school meals but also for things like Blue Badge applications and she confirmed that helping people to complete forms was part of the Financial Inclusions Officer's role. The Strategic Director reported that the school received a pupil premium for every student that received free school meals so getting more pupils signed up would make a huge difference. The Chairman queried if the new Financial Inclusion Officer would be inundated over the new few months given the current situation and the Head of Communities acknowledged that this was a potential danger. She added that CAB could still provide support and other funded specialist advice was available through DANES and the Disability Advice Service. It was noted that, as a Council, almost £220K had been put into services that provided advice and support to people but she acknowledged that this post could generate more enquiries.

Councillor Gooch queried how barriers could be broken down for those that needed to ask for help and overcome any sense of shame. The Head of Communities acknowledged this point and stated that Family Intervention Officers had told her that people were reluctant to open up about finances so it often took several meetings to build up enough trust for them to talk about money. She explained that, in the past, the Council had organised a six week campaign in conjunction with the CAB to encourage people to talk about finances and this could potentially be repeated, as well as working with community and voluntary groups to be a buddy and signpost clients to

available support services. She concluded that it was also about making sure that Social Prescribing Link Workers were aware of what was available.

The Chairman asked the Head of Communities to provide a summary on any final points and she referred to the emerging needs section in 3.2 of the report and emphasised the need to try and reach people as early as possible; build on the good partnership working that already existed; and do more to help people to access sustainable sources of food. She also referred to section 3.5 because it was clear there was still a big impact on isolation and loneliness with large numbers of people not yet willing to re-engage in their communities and whose mental and physical health was deteriorating as a result. She referred to the Suffolk Mind Emotional Needs Audit which had shown that, out of the twelve areas, the one recovering least quickly was the one around community which was obviously impacting in many different ways. The Head of Communities asked Members to support and promote Volunteer Suffolk and other national and local volunteering campaigns. She acknowledged there were a number of challenges but stressed there were also many positives eg the strong partnership in the public/private sector and the number of existing projects.

Councillor Coulam asked about nurses going into surgeries who would phone people that were isolated. The Head of Communities responded that she had not heard about this specific role but did know there was a real focus on additional health roles nationally to support GPs and nurses within a practice, such as health coaches and additional mental health resources, although there were challenges locally and nationally recruiting to those posts. She stated that the Council was hoping to work more closely with Primary Care Networks particularly in the north of the district through the new health structures and, as part of the Integrated Care System, there would be a focus on "place" eg Great Yarmouth and Waveney, and also on "localities" below "place" based on Primary Care Network levels. She concluded that Councillor Rudd was very involved in discussions about what those new structures would look like.

Councillor Byatt queried if there was anywhere else in East Suffolk that pantries might be needed and the Head of Communities responded that Halesworth already had a community larder that was similar and a potential site had been identified for a pantry in Saxmundham. She added that there was anticipated demand at other sites across the District including Felixstowe, so Officers were currently exploring a funding pot for other pantry locations.

The Committee received closing remarks from Councillor Smith who stated that it was clear the demand for support was changing and the cost of living rises were hitting residents hard. She concluded that she was pleased about how the partnerships were working together to provide support to East Suffolk residents. Councillor Rudd confirmed that she was in discussions with both CCGs about the two ICS which covered East Suffolk.

Councillor Beavan suggested that the Collaborative Communities Board be recommended to look again at developing an app to communicate with and share volunteers. The Head of Communities agreed to raise this at the Board rather than having it as a formal recommendation through Cabinet.

Councillor Lynch stated that, throughout the pandemic, GDPR rules had been relaxed but this was about to be stopped and information would need to be disposed of. The Head of Communities agreed that the rules were changing and the impact was already being seen eg the Council had been asked to dispose of any information it held about clinically extremely vulnerable people. She stated that the ability to share and pool information with other Suffolk partners had been a real positive to identify and target those who were clinically and financially extremely vulnerable. The Strategic Director confirmed that data was an ongoing issue in terms of sharing information with Government agencies and appropriate departments had been lobbied to encourage them to share data so the Council could do early intervention work, targeting people before they headed into crisis, but this was proving very difficult as they were risk averse despite the initiatives benefitting the person at the other end. He confirmed that the Council were continuing to pursue this.

Councillor Gooch referred to the gaps in the Emergency Plans map and asked if the Council should canvass the parishes to learn what the barriers were. The Chairman stated that the Committee could not make any recommendations to parishes direct but suggested that perhaps Councillors could take this up with their Parish Councils. Councillor Rudd stated that she would discuss the matter with the District Emergency Planning Officer next week. Councillor Lynch stated that Kesgrave had an Emergency Plan but it was not shown on the map.

The Chairman thanked Councillors Rudd and Smith and the Officers for their attendance and participation and, in particular, he thanked the Head of Communities for all her work on this review including the co-ordination of and support for the external witnesses.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That progress in relation to key areas of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically community response groups, volunteering and emergency planning, as well as the emerging needs be noted.
2. That Ben Hogston liaise with Councillor Beavan regarding a potential venue in Southwold for the next booster rollout.
3. That the Head of Communities raise the possible development of an app with the Collaborative Communities Board.
4. That the Cabinet Member for Communities discuss the promotion of Emergency Plans with the District Emergency Planning Officer.

## **4 Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Committee reviewed its current forward work programme and it was noted that, unfortunately, Councillor Deacon had not been able to complete the Scoping Form for his topic in time for the Committee to consider it at this meeting. It was agreed, therefore, that Councillor Deacon would bring forward his topic when it

was ready with a view to it being considered in 2022/23 Municipal Year and, in the meantime, the April Committee meeting date would be cancelled.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that they were changing the way in which their Forward Work Programme was drawn up and it was noted that an Away Evening would be held on Monday, 21 February 2022 to formulate the 2022/23 Work Programme.

The meeting concluded at 8.52pm

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Chairman