

To: **Executive**  
**27 April 2021**

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**Isolation and Loneliness Overview and Scrutiny review report**  
**Cllr Malcolm Tullett, Chair: Wellbeing and Finance Report**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To present to the Executive the findings of the Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel's review into isolation and loneliness and ask them to consider their recommendations.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Executive determines that the Health and Wellbeing Board prioritises isolation and loneliness in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy being developed in 2021/22 to incorporate a holistic approach to statutory, voluntary and charity sector projects across the borough by:
- reviewing the strategic coordination of projects led by statutory, voluntary and charity sector organisations.
  - commissioning technology to support a 'One Stop Shop' arrangement for signposting of services across all sectors.
  - developing a digital directory to underpin a single, self-sustaining signposting service 'One Stop Shop' for the whole community to ensure equality of access.
  - securing funding for a single coordination role between all commissioners and statutory and voluntary organisations to facilitate a sufficient range of community social activities in the market post Covid-19.
  - requesting partner organisations sign up to the national standard for volunteers.
- 2.2 The Executive finds the appropriate organisation to develop guidelines for use by employers to help employees return to the workplace.
- 2.3 The Executive highlights opportunities as well as understanding across the statutory and voluntary sector of where intuitive and assistive technology interventions work to keep people independent and build confidence to recommend and support their use alongside other interventions.
- 2.4 The Executive collaborates with its partners to build on existing work to increase residents' digital skills to enable them to access digital services.
- 2.5 The Executive works with volunteer, subsidised or commercial providers of community-based transport to increase the range of transport options, including on demand (paid for) options, available post COVID-19. Any such consideration should take account of green energy and conform to Bracknell's Climate Change Strategy.

**3 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel concluded their findings based on the evidence considered and review that was undertaken. The review report is attached as Appendix A.

## **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel assessed several options as part of the review.

## **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel carried out the review into isolation and loneliness as part of the overview and scrutiny work programme. The review activity took place between December 2020 and March 2021, reviewing a wide range of evidence. The panel also spoke to several residents and carers across the borough; representatives from a range of voluntary/charity sector organisations and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. However, the Panel were unable to interview officers from the local authority and Public Health Team due to the third COVID-19 lockdown which required them to focus on the delivery of front-line services. The full list of interviewees; findings and recommendations of the review are set out in the attached report.
- 5.2 A further recommendation to scrutinise mental health services in the borough was agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 7 April 2021 in addition to the recommendations to the Executive as set out above. This is because residents and representatives from informed us symptoms of isolation and loneliness, i.e. stress and fear were having a significant impact on people's mental health. It was agreed this subject was outside of the remit of the review and required further investigation.
- 5.3 During the review professionals from different organisations suggested savings could be accrued by pooling resources across organisations to create a digital library and 'One Stop Shop'. However, it was recognised this would be a large piece of work and there were likely to be costs attached initially to review any potential savings.

## **6 Consultation and Other Considerations**

### Legal Advice

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### Financial Advice

- 6.2 Members should note and comment on the recommendations, but they cannot be enacted until full costings have been carried out and the financial implications have been assessed.

### Other Consultation Responses

#### Response from Interim Director of Adult Social Care Operations

- 6.3 This was a useful review into isolation and loneliness in the borough and will be helpful during the development of Bracknell's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The reflection by the Panel to make the recommendations fit in with the timescales for the development of this strategy is particularly helpful. However, there are likely to be cost implications incurred by undertaking a review into the strategic coordination of

projects and activities aimed at tackling isolation and loneliness which need to be understood prior to undertaking this activity. We would very much welcome the evidence gathered during this review to be shared with the Public Health Team so this can be fed into the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

#### Response from Assistant Director of Customer Services, ICT and Digital

- 6.4 This review has helped to demonstrate the important contribution that digital technology makes in everyday life, and the role it can play in tackling social isolation. The recommendations in the report are welcomed, and promote the development of digital technology to support local communities and ensure access to services. A coordinated effort across the borough to improve the digital skills of residents will help to ensure that all residents are able to access the services they need, and the social interaction to keep them connected with their communities.

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 An initial equalities screening has been completed and is attached at Appendix B.

#### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 There are a number of risks if the recommendations as set out in Section 2 of this report are not accepted but the main issue is that a lack of oversight about what currently exists in the borough to help residents who feel isolated and lonely will mean the duplication of resources and effort we found during this review will continue to exist in the borough. There are also risks in not tackling the problem which was highlighted by residents about accessing activities and the issue of suitable transport.

#### Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:
- 6.8 Have no impact on emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- 6.9 The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions are that conversations with volunteer, subsidised or commercial providers of community-based transport to increase the range of transport options, including on demand (paid for) options, should only be put in place if they conform to Bracknell's Climate Change Strategy.

#### Background Papers

None.

#### Contact for further information

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