

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Title: Tackling Loneliness Task Group

1.0 **Summary**

1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the final report and recommendations of the Tackling Loneliness Task Group. The report is attached as Appendix A.

1.2 Cabinet is asked to consider the report and recommendations.

2.0 **Risks**

No risks have been identified as a result of the task group's recommendations.

3.0 **Recommendations**

3.1 that the following Tackling Loneliness Task Group recommendations be agreed

- i) To provide signposting to appropriate organisations for those experiencing loneliness, through the use of:
 - a dedicated page on the council's website
 - leaflets and publications from relevant organisations in the customer service centre at the Town Hall and in other council owned facilities e.g., community centres, Watford Museum and the leisure centres
 - information from external organisations displayed on community noticeboards
- ii) to provide training for councillors to help them to recognise and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work in the local community
- iii) to provide best practice guidance for councillors – to be included as a downloadable document on the council's intranet
- iv) that the Mayor writes to

- HCC underlining the importance of tackling loneliness amongst Watford residents and encouraging them to ensure the issue remains a priority and is reflected in the allocation of resources
 - the MP for Watford underlining the importance of tackling loneliness and encouraging him to take an active part in cross-party efforts to address the issue and to speak out on behalf of residents who may be affected
- v) that the Mayor encourages councillors to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in their ward when allocating money from their Neighbourhood Locality Funds
- vi) that Cabinet notes the Task Group Chair is to write and encourage the Portfolio Holder for Community to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in Watford in their consideration of the council's Small Grants Fund applications.

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Report approved by: Carol Chen, Head of Democracy and Governance

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 In March 2017 Councillor Mauthoor moved a motion at Council calling for strategic ways to be found to help tackle loneliness in the borough. The motion was seconded by Councillor Taylor. Council unanimously agreed to set up a task group to look at the prevalence of loneliness within the borough and to address ways in which Watford Borough Council might make a difference.

4.2 Councillor Mauthoor completed the scrutiny proposal form which was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 22 June 2017. The scrutiny committee agreed to the establishment of the task group. In addition it agreed the following membership –

- Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor (elected as Chair at the task group's first meeting)
- Councillor Stephen Bolton
- Councillor Stephen Cavinder
- Councillor Kareen Hastrick
- Councillor Rabi Martins

- 4.3 Prior to the first meeting councillors were provided with various documents and links to websites that covered the subject of loneliness and campaigns to tackle the issue. They were also provided with details of several radio programmes that had been broadcast about loneliness and its impact.
- 4.4 The task group held two formal meetings. The first meeting took place on 22 September, when the councillors considered the issue of loneliness and social isolation in Watford. It was acknowledged that Watford Borough Council did not have a specific remit in this area. However councillors were interested in the well-being of the local Watford community. They agreed to hold a second meeting which would be held during the day.
- 4.5 The second meeting was held on 1 December 2017, commencing at 10.30 a.m. The task group had agreed to invite representatives from a range of organisations to provide evidence against a list of agreed questions. The evidence helped the task group to understand the extent of the problem in the local community and ways in which the organisations were tackling the issue.
- 4.6 As part of the review Councillors Mauthoor and Cavinder attended a seminar ‘Tackling Isolation and Loneliness in the UK: Improving Well Being and Social Inclusion at all Ages’, which had been organised by the Public Policy Exchange. Speakers included representatives from local government, Public Health England and charitable organisations.
- 4.7 Cabinet is asked to consider and agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 3.1 above.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Head of Finance comments that there are no further direct budget implications from the recommendations in the report or the Appendix.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

- 5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

5.3 **Equalities/Human Rights**

- 5.3.1 Loneliness can affect all sectors of the community and all ages. The aim of the task group’s recommendations is to ensure that people have access to information and organisations that can help in this issue.

Appendices

Appendix A – Tackling Loneliness Task Group report

Background Papers

There are no specific background papers for this report. All background information used during the task group's work is referenced in the final report.

File Reference

None