

Area East – Covid-19 Community Response

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Purpose of the Report

To provide Members of the Area East Committee with an opportunity to discuss the current situation regarding the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to raise issues or concerns in their wards.

Public Interest

The community response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been extraordinary. This report provides an overview of support available to groups and individuals and provides an opportunity to check that the needs of vulnerable people and the volunteers supporting them continue to be met.

Recommendation

That members comment and feedback and raise any issues or concerns relating to the current situation in their ward.

Background

A request for a report on the support available to Town and Parish Councils and community organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic was made by Area South Committee in April. Area East members agreed that a report would provide members with an opportunity to feedback any concerns and share examples of good practice.

A great deal of information, advice and guidance is provided on the SSDC website.
<https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/life-events/coronavirus-support/coronavirus-self-help-hub/>

The situation continues to change rapidly. This report offers a brief overview which is subject to change. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

Support to local communities

Members will be aware of the work that has been done by individuals and groups in their own wards as a direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Work was undertaken with Parish and Town Councils to map the services that had become available to support the vulnerable people in communities. This identified that local solutions had been put in place in almost every parish. These solutions range from an individual parish contact to coordinate support to highly organised groups offering shopping, prescription collection, welfare calls, food boxes and in some cases accommodation for key workers or those at risk at home. This mapping work will not have captured the vast amount of informal help given by friends, neighbours and family members. The information gathered has enabled a flow of information and mutual referral between the groups and the SSDC wellbeing hub.

The above, alongside the support for the established community and voluntary sector has been co-ordinated and supported extremely effectively by Spark Somerset.

Funding for groups

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) immediately established the Somerset Coronavirus Appeal which offers grants to new and existing groups that are providing support to vulnerable people. A fund of over £640,000 has been established for direct funding and donations. As of 15th May, £339,166 has been given out in grants. The map of grants awarded shows that 3 awards have been made to groups in Area East. Further details are available on the SCF website.

<https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/news/361/73/Somerset-Community-Foundation-s-response-to-COVID-19>

New funding streams are being announced all the time and we will continue to work with colleagues in other districts and the county to ensure that information is disseminated to local groups and town and parish councils.

Support for Business

Information, advice and links to financial and other support is available on the SSDC website. <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/life-events/coronavirus-support/business-support/>

Local food and drink promotion

Many local businesses have adapted their offer with many establishing takeaway and delivery services. Local food and drink producers and suppliers have also looked to support the local market. A directory of local food and drink producers and suppliers has been created and is available on the SSDC website. The aim is to develop the directory to help recovery through promoting food and drink businesses and encouraging a greater emphasis on buying local produce.

Economic Development specialists continue to provide support to businesses and are focused on preparing for the recovery phase.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Corporate Priority Implications

The priorities have been developed taking into account the SSDC Corporate plan priorities.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

This is considered on an individual project and programme basis as appropriate. The overall priority is to seek to create more balanced communities where people can live, work and get access to the services and facilities they need on a daily basis. Area working (Area+) helps to improve access to facilities, activities and services, reducing the need to travel.

Equality and Diversity Implications

This is considered on an individual project and programme basis as appropriate.

Background Papers

None