

Connecting in Wye

Friday 29th November 2019 12 - 2pm St Gregory and St Martin Church, Notes

1. Welcome - Purpose of the meeting

Penny Haynes introduced herself as the Chair of Our Place Wye and welcomed everybody to the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to review progress and exchange ideas to improve “connecting in Wye”; in addition to take the opportunity to take part in the KCC consultation on Wellbeing Services in the Community. www.kent.gov.uk/wellbeingconsultation

2. Update on progress

Dave Martin gave an update on progress on the ideas and suggestions made at the last public meeting held on 16th March 2018.

Since November 2017 there have been several meetings held in the community to discuss how to reduce loneliness and social isolation. The focus has moved on from only discussing social isolation and loneliness within our community to “connections in Wye”.

Our Place Wye is about how organisations can work better together with the community rather than it be a separate organisation. How might neighbours help each other and how might organisations, for example the Wye surgery, Church, Parish Council, Women’s Institute “join up the dots” to help create an thriving and inclusive community.

The meeting on 16th March had set out suggestions under three main headings according to the research and advice from the Campaign to End Loneliness:-

- Focus: upon the purpose and background to the activity.
- Identify and make contact
- Practical support

What has happened since 16.3.18?

A Small group met three times to advance the suggestions:-

Focus: upon the purpose and background to the activity.

Our Place Wye had Joined the Campaign to End Loneliness Learning Network to connect with like-minded organisations, learn from the latest research, and share examples of good practice around loneliness.

The group considered the proposal for some kind of weekly drop in at the Village Hall - a place for a coffee/ drop in session – village networking surgery where people could offer support as well sign post to information and help; perhaps for professionals to offer services – such as podiatry, financial services, hairdressers. A known regular “place to go”, **for all ages** as many people across the age span could experience loneliness and would welcome support – such as young parents with small children.

However it became difficult to identify the best location for such a drop in --- the choices being the Village Hall, The Methodists Church hall and the Church and perhaps the former college buildings. It was agreed to hold this proposal in abeyance until the other initiatives have been developed and then re assess the options.

The group focused discussions on organising a “week” or an event such as the Big Lunch <https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/thebiglunchhomepage> to make visible connecting people.

It was the intention to arrange a “Fresher’s week”, the idea being to invite all the clubs and societies in Wye to have “taster” days and sessions. This would be an opportunity to invite and welcome people to see, view and meet the different clubs and societies in the village.

The aim being to extend a welcome to everybody and to put in place ways to “buddy” folks to “try out things”.

This week was to coincide with the opening of the Village Hall after refurbishment, unfortunately this proved difficult to organise due to the building works delay. The intention is still to have a “week” of pop up taster sessions – in concert with the Village Hall and the meeting was asked to comment.

Identify and make contact

It had been proposed to develop the “welcome pack “. This was now happening and a group was meeting soon to review the pack content, delivery and process of identifying new residents.

Some of the key points and benefits of the welcome pack were:-

- The benefit of personal contact/door knocking a genuine welcome.
- The overlap and duplication of much of the content of the current pack.
- The challenge of knowing when people move into the parish.
- Ownership of the purpose merged Church, Parish Council and Community interests in community cohesion and promoting “neighbourliness”.
- Future challenge of significant influx of new residents (and some resistance to development).

Practical support

The proposal - “To rejuvenate the car service” had been met in recent months by Robin Pelham-Reid taking over the coordination of the scheme and the extension of the journeys to within the village e.g. to hairdressers rather than only to the surgery. There was still a need for volunteer drivers.

General discussion

Reference was made to the idea of “community connectors” as were so successful in Frome (which has some 511).

The community connectors were asked not to signpost “willy nilly” but rather to signpost either to website or to a specific person/co-ordinator; this avoided inappropriate sign posting and responsibility of the outcome.

The group had discussed this idea of asking people in the village to become connectors; it was agreed to explore this further perhaps for there to be a leaflet which could be provided to businesses such as hairdressers to let people know what support is available.

The primary challenge of seeking to reduce isolation and loneliness is identifying people, making contact and establishing trust – most people do not acknowledge nor wish to consider themselves in need of help let alone asking for such help.

There was discussion about the delivery of the welcome pack and how for people to be identifiable such as wearing a badge or “uniform”. It was agreed to explore this perhaps in conjunction with the delivery of the quarterly newsletter .

There was agreement to consider the “fresher’s week” idea with the Village Hall; identifying a good time in the year was acknowledged as a challenge to avoid conflicting events. However it was emphasised this was to attract and make contact with people who do not usually take part rather than the usual participants.

3. Wye Community Companions

Richard Sinden gave an update on the proposal for a Welcome Home scheme. This envisaged volunteers help people returning from hospital – for example, by doing the shopping, or giving them a lift home. They also help them to settle back at home by tidying up, putting the heating on, sorting post, etc.

The scheme was developed with the Wye surgery and started in January 2018, Ashford Volunteer Centre had trained and “police checked” (Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS) 8 volunteers.

The scheme has recently re-launched as the **Wye Community Companions** to widen the scheme to provide support beyond those recently hospitalised or housebound. In total some 10 people have been referred.

The scheme has been working well although it’s acknowledged that some people being visited really wished for continuity of visits beyond the specified amount. They want the volunteers to keep visiting rather than simply give initial support, once a bond is made it’s difficult to curtail the contact.

Richard urged people to make people aware of the scheme and encourage people to refer to it.

4. Sensory Garden

Richard Sinden announced that following Ashford Borough Council (ABC) granting a lease for an area of disused land opposite the Fire station he had been recently notified that ABC had awarded a grant for this to be developed as a Sensory Garden. He had also been awarded a grant from the ABC Councillor Noel Ovenden and Our Place Wye may be able to contribute funding as well.

The Sensory Garden would be for the whole community to relax in and enjoy. Through a series of working parties it is hoped to bring the community together to clear the land, build raised beds and benches, hedgehog houses, lay a pathway, grow and plant up the site.

The garden will contain several fruit trees which residents can pick and eat for free. There will also be several herb plants growing on site again these may be picked from to uses in cooking. Each herb will have a plaque with describing its various uses. The sensory garden will have wheelchair access and benches that can be removed if necessary at night.

Richard stated that now funding available and the project viable, he intended to invite community involvement including garden designers and contributions from suppliers.

5. Our Place Wye Website

Penny announced that the Our Place Wye website was “live”!

<https://ourplacewye.org.uk/>

Jasper Bouverie informed the meeting that Rob Barker had designed the logo with James Burnett taking the photograph using his drone. Len Pritchard had developed the website.

6. KCC consultation on Wellbeing Services in the Community

Dave informed the meeting that KCC was undertaking consultation to hear views to help inform the design of Wellbeing services. So this was an opportunity to take part in the KCC consultation on Wellbeing Services in the Community.

www.kent.gov.uk/wellbeingconsultation

The consultation period ended 1st December 2019 and Our Place Wye would be submitting a response as a result of this meeting.

The Council currently spends £5.9m on these services each year. These are services which provide support to people close to where they live that helps them to feel physically and mentally well and keeps people connected to the community in which they live. This includes reducing loneliness.

Shaping the new service

In future KCC proposes community-based wellbeing services are provided in two ways:

1) Services focused on outcomes, that:

- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Promote physical activity
- Promote access to arts, culture and heritage
- Provide access to information and advice

2) Specialist services that:

- Support people with sensory impairments – support with assistive technology, information, advice, peer support
- Support people with a physical disability – peer support, information, advice
- Provide support for people living with dementia – for example through a dementia link worker

General discussion

A number of points were made in general discussion:-

- The importance of “trusted points of contact”.
- It was little point knowing about where to go to find information if:-
it’s difficult to get there (Transport)
You need an escort
The information is only on the internet and you aren’t connected
- The importance of “advocates” was highlighted to help promote people’s interests and assist with interpreting information and opportunities for support.
- It was mentioned that often nowadays information and supposed support is available via the telephone... not in person.
- The importance of one to one contact was emphasised.
- The point was reiterated that people need on-going contact and support not just a few weeks then left.

The consultation questionnaire would be submitted to reflect the discussion and points made by the closing date of 1st December.

7. Summary and close

Penny drew the meeting to a close by thanking everybody for attending and for their contributions. It was agreed that a note of the meeting would be circulated and the various suggestions that had indications of support would be followed up.