

Policy & Resources Committee

Date: Tuesday 3 November 2020
Title: Report - External Organisations

a) Barns Centre (Cllrs Deacock and Dodds)

Barns Centre AGM on 29 October 2020. Report to follow.

b) Citizens Advice (Cllr Austin)

These comments represent extracts from the reports to the AGM of Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice (OSAVCAB) held electronically on 20th October 2020.

Over the course of the year, 11,209 people from South & Vale received help by telephone or in person which is almost the same number as in the previous year. This suggests a 'plateauing' in client numbers after a 3 year increase of 30%. However, this may reflect the limit of the current workforce capacity rather than a reduction in public demand. During the year, 150 part time, skilled volunteers were supported by a small number of paid staff (11.5 full-time equivalent staff (26 individuals) across 4 main sites and several outreaches).

South & Vale residents also made an estimated 120,000 visits last year to citizensadvice.org.uk the national Citizens Advice website.

The main areas in which help was needed from OSAVCAB were: • Benefits and Tax Credits • Debt, bankruptcy and money advice • Housing problems • Employment problems • Relationship and family issues

CA was awarded three significant contracts: a Money Advice Service Debt Advice Project, Universal Credit Help to Claim and the Energy Advice Programme. This has involved hiring part time paid specialist advisers.

Data from the National Citizens Advice survey of clients carried out 13-18 weeks after their advice sessions found that 78% of clients reported that their problem had been 'completely, mostly or partly resolved' and 89% of clients were satisfied with their overall experience of the service.

Every pound invested in OSAVCAB leads to approximately • £7 in fiscal benefit (savings to local and national government) • £28 in benefits to individuals (income gained through benefits and debts written off)

OSAVCAB achieved a surplus on unrestricted activities of £27,028 in 2019/20 (2018/19 £25,977). This was thanks to larger than expected donations and contracts. The contracts are to provide debt advice and help to claim Universal Support. Income has increased by £76,522 to £472,322 (2018/19 £395,800). The 5% reduction of income from the District Councils of £12,793 has been offset by increases in funds from contracts of £63,822 and an increase in donations of £26,424. Most of the donations are for restricted purposes with matched expenditure. While OSAVCAB considers this an excellent result for the year, it also recognises that the sources of income are more unstable and less certain than before with no certainty that the District Council grants will be extended beyond 21/22.

c) Health Hub (including Community Hub Pilot) (Cllr Champken-Woods)

Health hub so much is going on planning wise I'm not sure what to report! Watch this space.

d) NALC (Cllr Dyer)

NALC have continued to circulate advice regarding Covid but otherwise nothing to report of direct relevance to Town/Parish Councils.

e) Red Kite Family Centre (Cllr Emery)

Red Kite has re-opened face to face sessions at the Thame site enabling small groups of families (up to six) able to attend each session. Prior to half term, 9 sessions were run weekly, reaching 39 families over the last 5 weeks. We continue to offer 1:1 support via telephone to vulnerable families in the community and 8 parent learners have achieved their level 1 Makaton sign language qualification via 'Zoom' through our grant partnership with Abingdon and Witney college.

The midwifery service have moved permanently into the building so we are working in close partnership with them to reach all new parents in the local area. Health visitors are offering 1:1 appointments to families, also based from the centre.

Due to a successful bid to the National Lottery the centre has been awarded additional funding to increase session delivery during the pandemic. The centre has recruited two additional members of the team on a fixed term contract for six months. This will enable the centre to double the number of sessions delivered during the pandemic using a 6 day a week delivery model. The Chinnor site will re-open after half term and the centre will be running Monday - Saturday offering 13 sessions a week to families.

The Centre has partnered with Sharing Life Trust to open the weekly community larder in the town. Several families have joined the scheme so far which is really encouraging. The larder offers families a chance to purchase food for a small membership fee each week, all stock is surplus supermarket waste.

f) Thame Business Forum (Cllr Dyer)

No meetings have been possible since February, nor likely in the foreseeable future, so nothing to report.

g) Thame Senior Friendship Centre (Cllr Midwinter)

We had our first meeting since the Lockdown on Tuesday 13th October, much to the delight of our members, as the week progressed more attended on each of the three days. Unfortunately we have to restrict numbers because of social distancing, so members are allowed to attend only once a week so they all have a chance to come.

We are exploring the possibility of supplying and delivering a frozen meal to some of our Members who are unable to come into the club. There is a grant for this purpose, it is just a case to see how this would work out practically. The grant cannot be used for any other purpose. We have twenty on the waiting list to join us, it show how much this service is needed.

h) Thame & District Housing Association (Cllr Emery)

The Annual General Meeting was held via Zoom on Monday 14th September 2020.

We have been able to increase the amount of time spent working in the office for some office based staff, with covid-safe arrangements in place. Other staff continue to work mostly from home.

Our residents continue to be well supported by telephone, door-step visits and some visits in their homes using PPE. We have held some small coffee gatherings, complying with the rule of 6 and social distancing. These have been popular, enabling residents to meet up with their neighbours albeit as a social distance. All residents have been given the opportunity to take part and take-up has been good.

Refurbishment works at Croft Court are scheduled to begin early in November.

We have been granted planning permission to convert a building into flats and build two new flats, adjacent to Pearce Court.

i) Thame Youth Memorial Trust (Cllr Tipping)

Nothing to report.

j) Thame Youth Projects Group (Cllr Tipping)

- Things are progressing on James's (New office space) hopefully sorted soon.
- Agreement is place for new office located in Thame.
- A lot of good data has been collected, many very supportive of the new centre/ build. 11 percent had expressed concern in the location. A new communication will be put out by mid-October and could involve local residents.
- As a group we have moved over to Google teams, despite initial issues on setup I believe this is a good move forward.
- New website/ trustee images are in the process of being taken by myself at the studio. Most trustees have been shot with just 2 left to capture. Personal shout out to James (youth leader) for the images on green screen he created for future use.
- Images have already assisted James with talks he has had to set up.
- Last week marked the first Covid safe youth café at the Barnes Centre. Attendance was low but the weather that week did not assist matters. Plans for very well thought out so hopefully today went better on that front. Youth Café shall remain at the Barnes until Christchurch reopens which for now remains closed.
- Attendance has continued to be low due to having to pre-register in advance to meet the Barnes rules around Covid. Discussions were in place to see if there could be an ability to accommodate walk-ins.
- AGM Notes: The Youth Projects AGM was held on October 20th. The overall feeling among the members was it was a great success which highlighted our work in last 12 months and plans for the future.

k) 21st Century Thame (Cllr Fickling and Francis)

Nothing to report.

l) Welfare Trust (Cllr Champken-Woods)

Nothing to report from Thame Welfare Trust next meeting is January 2021.