

Policy & Resources Committee

Date: Tuesday 16 February 2021
Title: Report - External Organisations

a) Barns Centre (Cllrs Deacock and Dodds)

No further updates as we have not met.

b) Citizens Advice (Cllr Austin)

- January 2021 was the busiest month ever: CA advised over 1,100 people across South and Vale.
- The Winter Support Grant is being managed by CA on behalf of the district councils and it has over £100k to allocate by March 31st to eligible people. This help takes the form of supermarket vouchers and assistance with energy bills.
- CA wants to recruit more volunteer advisers to be able to meet increasing demand. They would be glad of any help to achieve this. It is suggested that TTC include details in the newsletter.

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

As you can imagine the emphasis is on vaccinations at the moment so nothing to report.

d) NALC (Cllr Dyer)

Nothing significant to report. NALC have continued to lobby Government on behalf of the Town & Parish sector, and have focussed almost entirely on the challenges facing Councils during the pandemic, sharing advice and best practice throughout. The Acting Town Clerk continues to share the weekly NALC and monthly OALC update emails with Councillors.

e) Red Kite Family Centre (Cllr Emery)

We wanted to write and give you an update on the work of the Family Centre and also to once again express our gratitude for your continuing financial support.

As you will know, the ongoing Covid19 pandemic has had a big impact on how we operate and the services we have been able to offer. We were delighted to re-open our doors throughout the Christmas term, offering 9 weekly groups, limited to six families in each session. The families were so grateful to have an opportunity to safely meet with other and to connect within the community. It was a challenging yet refreshing term, running groups in PPE and strict restrictions around singing, cleanliness and social distancing but it certainly highlighted to us the pressures for young families during this pandemic, particularly parental mental health and financial strain. In addition to our weekly sessions, we were thrilled to work in partnership with the council to deliver a 'pop up Christmas craft marquee' in the Town centre as part of the advent calendar. It certainly brought cheer to staff and families alike.

Sadly, the current lockdown situation and the rising levels of infections meant we needed to review our services for the safety of the community and our staff team and we made the decision after Christmas to close the Family Centre as a drop-in and stop all our face to face parent and child sessions.

We continue to deliver reduced non-contact services structured around three priorities:

- The health and well-being of each member of our staff team.
- To maintain what we can of the Family Centre's role of advice and support to families with young children, especially those most vulnerable.
- To build on the continued sustainability of our charity.

Those families due to attend sessions this term received bespoke home learning packs, delivered to their door. We are also offering two weekly virtual groups to new parents in the community with young babies, these have been gratefully received and each session is attended by an average of 8 parents.

Our monthly autism support group also continues to run virtually for families undergoing diagnosis or caring for a child on the autistic spectrum.

We have enhanced our online presence, sending a weekly activities newsletter to all our registered members, posting regular updates to our Facebook page and with a special 'RedKite@home' area on our website. In addition, the staff are maintaining regular phone contact with about 30 vulnerable families known to us, attending virtual 'Team around the Family' and child protection meetings and liaising closely with other support services and settings in the town. We are responding to phone calls, messages and emails during our usual working hours. To balance the demands for staff of home school and running the centre services, the whole team are now working part-time in addition to being part-time furloughed.

Additionally, our two newest team members, employed through the community lottery grant to enable charities to continue during the pandemic, are spending a morning a week developing our new 'Red Kite Forest School site'. The centre have kindly been donated the use of section of land at a farm in Moreton and we aim to start running outdoor learning sessions for families after Easter as part of our ambitions to support the Thame Green Living Plan.

We feel grateful that local families expecting babies and those with newborns have still been able to make use of the Family Centre as the midwifery and health teams have used the space for 1:1 appointments during Covid-19 and they continue to do so.

In common with many other charities, our sources of income have been badly hit by the emergency. All our paid for activities and fundraising events have had to be cancelled or postponed indefinitely and we have had some withdrawals from our 'Friends' scheme as well.

We have plans to open following the lockdown period and our Easter term programme currently look as follows:

- Face to face groups to run at both our Thame and Chinnor sites subject to government guidelines.
- The opening of Red Kite Forest School
- Delivering two parenting courses and level 2 makaton sign language training
- Our planned roadshow based in an inflatable marquee which is aimed at raising awareness of Family Centre activities in the wider community, and in particular the new housing developments in both Thame and Chinnor has had to be put on hold because of the current emergency. We are hoping to run some sessions this coming autumn.

We all hope that the current emergency situation eases before too long as we know what a serious impact it is having on many households, businesses and charities.

We want to thank Thame Town Council for your continued support and a special thanks to Linda for the thoughtful Christmas gifts for the team, they were very much appreciated.

Report author: Amy Spicer, Family Centre Leader and John Hulett, Chair of Trustees.

f) Thame Business Forum (Cllr Dyer)

Currently suspended, having last met in February 2020, and will not be resurrected until Covid regulations are substantially relaxed.

g) Thame Senior Friendship Centre (Cllr Midwinter)

Because of COVID regulations, the Thame Senior Friendship Centre has not been able to meet for such a long time, so to give cheer at Christmas 2020 all members received a Christmas hamper. Also to keep contact with each member, it was organised for each member to receive a weekly fish and chips which is delivered to them by volunteers, and organised by the chairman and the acting manager. It is planned to deliver at Easter time, afternoon tea and an Easter egg to each one of them as well. We are trying very hard to keep contact by these actions so our members will know they are thought of and not forgotten. These actions help a little to fight loneliness.

h) Thame & District Housing Association (Cllr Emery)

The staff team continues to work hard to support Pearce Court and Antsy Court and Croft Road residents through lockdown. Loneliness is a significant factor for many and it is hard for people to have to be back in lockdown having begun to hold some small group activities again during the autumn. They are all looking forward to being able to reintroduce activities once again, but of course only when lockdown is over and it is safe to do so. As they could not hold their normal Christmas meal for residents it was cooked as usual by the Scheme Managers and delivered to each flat instead. This was much appreciated by the residents who opted into this and they are doing a similar thing each month during lockdown.

In accordance with government guidance for lockdown those employees who can work from home are doing so, and those who need to be on site are working to covid-safe arrangements. This is for their own protection and that of our residents. We continue to keep our residents informed by means of frequent newsletters in which we provide news and information relevant to our residents and signpost them to other agencies which may provide help, such as mental health organisations, debt counselling, food banks, etc.

Work to refurbish and modernise flats at Croft Court continues and the roof has recently been replaced. Specifications are being drawn up for the conversion of the hall adjoining Pearce Court.

Report author: Angie Menary, TDHA.

i) Thame Youth Memorial Trust (Cllr Tipping)

We are currently processing 2 applications for the memorial site. Letters of acceptance will be sent to the applicants and more will be sent forward and processed in accordance with Covid restrictions.

j) Thame Youth Projects Group (Cllr Tipping)

Building: after many talks on the subject, we are looking at alternate options for a youth center. These include looking at different buildings around Thame that we could occupy to make a base and buildings such as Modular buildings. These are quick builds that have a life span of around 30 years. We also have our first sub committee meeting on the build which was a very productive meet with many suggestions to help the build and new location move forward. More news will come from these as we progress.

Youth work: this is obviously being done remotely due to lockdown / Covid. An Escape room online

Event took place on January 27th. After getting a report back this was a huge success with further being planned.

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

The 21st Century Thame Partnership continues to expand its work, despite the lockdown, and has recently added its support to a new Thame group of volunteers known as the Thame Wombles. (See all 21st Century Thame projects [HERE](#))

This group was set up by local resident, Joe Chapman, and its Facebook page already has 120 members! Everyday at least one family goes out with litter pickers around the Thame clearing up rubbish left lying around. One group heroically went and cleared up needles around the area of the Esso garage.

21st Century Thame's Bank Account is used to manage The Thame Wombles funding and outgoings - they already have one sponsor, Ian Biddle of Thame Freight, who has donated money to buy litter pickers etc. 21st Century Thame Chair, Sue Downhill, reports that '...at this rate, Thame Tidy Day will not be necessary this year.' And so it is hoped that the group will be able to carry out other projects like painting a school for instance. Thame Wombles is also covered by 21st Century Thame's Insurance, reducing the group's outgoings.

The group intends to help Cuttlebrook Nature Reserve litter-free and is in contact with Bucks Recycling for the removal of larger objects.

Thame Trees Project

THE 420 trees acquired by 21st Century have all now been planted!! Sue Downhill was accepted as a Department of Education Assessor, to oversee the son of a member, whose son carried out some of the hedge planting, as part of his Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The next stages of the project include planting fruit trees. They are looking for people who would like to plant a fruit tree in their garden but would like help with the cost of the tree and any stakes or guards for them. With the coronavirus restrictions at the moment, it is not possible to organise planting parties. So in order to progress getting trees in the ground they're asking everyone if they would be willing to plant a tree or two or more themselves. The aim is to bulk purchase fruit trees for this next project. So, anyone who would like to plant a fruit tree in their garden (or anywhere else that they have permission to plant !) 21st Century Thame will pay half ! For the first 10 requests they will supply free ! They have £500 budget for this project

Also in the pipeline is the Woodland Trust's "Half Acre Wood" project which involves residents planting trees in their back gardens, adding up to one hectare by November/December 2021. A total of 420 trees will be applied for when applications open in April. A contribution from Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker's councillor grant has been applied for to help fund some more items for the Thame Equipment Bank, including Litter-pickers.

Love Thame, also supported by 21st Century Thame, is still selling Love Thame Calendars and currently promoting a raffle, to raise funds for the Sharing Life Trust - Thame Food Bank. <https://www.jumblebee.co.uk/lovethamevalentinesraffle>

Finally, 21st Century Thame has been meeting on Zoom with Thame Green Living Group to establish areas of mutual support.

l) Welfare Trust (Cllr Champken-Woods)

No meeting so nothing to report.