



Scrutiny Response and Recovery (People) Task and Finish Group Final Report

Corporate Priority:	Excellent Services positively impacting on our communities.
Relevant Ward Member(s):	N/A
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/A
Exempt Information:	No
Key Decision:	No
Subject to call-in:	No Not key decision

1 Summary

- 1.1 The final report of the Scrutiny Response and Recovery (People) Task and Finish Group is attached at Appendix A. The Task and Finish Group have proposed a number of recommendations which have been approved by the Scrutiny Committee for recommendation to Cabinet.

2 Recommendations

That the Cabinet:	
2.1	Recognises the work of the Task and Finish Group and acknowledges the contents of the report.
2.2	Approves the recommendations of the Final Report of the Scrutiny Response and Recovery (People) Task and Finish Group (Appendix A), as written below:
2.2.1	That assurance is given to Scrutiny that the Council is being proactive in identifying and putting measures in place to prevent people from becoming homeless, with a particular emphasis on encouraging people to seek housing

advice and support prior to them becoming homeless. This should take the following form:

- a) A proactive communications approach including a poster campaign (public facing communications that emphasises the need for people to contact the Council for advice and support as soon as possible and not when they have already become homeless).
- b) A proactive communications approach that encourages landlords to contact the Council before they serve a notice, to see if we can work together to address any issues and stabilise the tenancy.
- c) A proactive approach to engaging with landlords in the Borough (for example, through a landlords' forum).
- d) Readily available information and guidance about how the Council can help and prevent homelessness from occurring to begin with (for example, negotiating with landlords, addressing underlying issues that have led to the tenancy being at risk, implementation of support to stabilise the tenancy).
- e) An update report to the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time to demonstrate how successful the Council has been in preventing households from becoming homeless, and any lessons learned.

2.2.2 As soon as practicable, the Council and appropriate partners should host a Jobs Fair for people aged between 16 and 24. It is recommended that the jobs fair should include businesses, the DWP, Brooksby-Melton College, advice services and sign-posting.

2.2.3 Engagement with the lead officer for communications in respect to future Scrutiny studies where consultation and engagement may be required is crucial to ensure there is clarity on expectations, timescales and visibility/reach of consultation exercise.

2.2.4 We recommend that the Council host a Volunteer Fair to be held at Parkside with as much publicity as possible to encourage as many charitable companies, voluntary organisations and possible volunteers to attend.

2.2.5 The Council should review its existing processes to ensure that the digitally excluded have the same access to services as digitally competent residents have. In addition, the Council should work with partners (e.g. Age UK) to ensure that the digitally excluded have every opportunity to become digitally included if they choose. This could also be by increasing the help which the Council already provides in the computer suite at Phoenix House so that all residents, who wish, can obtain the necessary skills to access the internet. In addition, the Council should consider using the Government's Kick Start scheme, to employ a 16 to 24 year-old on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term employment, to help residents develop their digital knowledge (Age UK has a Digital Buddy training video which provides guidance).

2.2.6 The Council should review existing processes for monitoring its treatment of BAME residents and ensuring that BAME residents are treated fairly. This should include looking to make improvements where required.

2.2.7 A refresh of the Helping People Partnership:

- a) To ensure that the Helping People Partnership Board is representative of relevant partners who can deliver an effective and collaborative approach to health and wellbeing in Melton.

- b) **To ensure that the Helping People Partnership Board incorporates Covid recovery/insights, needs and trends as a standing agenda item to enable collective understanding and action planning, relevant to the remit of the partnership.**
- c) **To ensure that the outcomes of the partnership are made available to scrutiny members with an update report in six months.**

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group produced the recommendations after gathering evidence and making conclusions based on the evidence, all of which are outlined within the Final Report at Appendix A.
- 3.2 At their meeting on 5 October 2021, the Scrutiny Committee approved that the report and recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval.

4 Background

- 4.1 On 1 September 2020 the Melton Borough Council Scrutiny Committee approved the establishment of two Task and Finish Groups to review the response and recovery in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to both people and place based issues.
- 4.2 It was agreed that one Task and Finish Group would relate to People issues and would be led by Cllr Pat Cumbers, Chairman of Scrutiny Committee. The other Task and Finish Group would relate to Place issues and would be led by Cllr Rob Bindloss, Vice-Chairman of Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.3 Members agreed that support for the local community during and in the wake of the pandemic would be critical to the recovery process and therefore it was proposed that Scrutiny evaluate and analyse the impact and the response of the Council and external organisations.

5 Main Considerations

- 5.1 The Task and Finish Group's scope and purpose was to collate and analyse evidence in order to identify lessons learnt and any areas of weakness in order to provide recommendations which might inform and improve the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and also provide a template for dealing in with any future similar emergency situation.
- 5.2 Full details of the scope, purpose and anticipated outcomes of the Groups were set out in the terms of reference and draft scoping documents approved at the [September 2020 Scrutiny Committee Meeting](#).
- 5.3 A scoping exercise was carried out for the Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (People) and the Group agreed to focus on the following main themes:
 - i) Finance
 - Unemployment and welfare benefits
(including debt and Universal Credit)
 - Homelessness

ii) Health

- Mental Health
(Social Isolation and digital exclusion)
- Physical health and wellbeing
(Director for Public Health Report on Covid-19 impact on BAME)
(Support for Leisure Centres)

iii) Community

- Support Services
(Council Services/External Organisations/Voluntary Sector)
- Anti-social behaviour and community tensions

5.4 The timetable for the review can be found below:

Date	Actions
17 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First meeting: Summary/Background• Review Terms of Reference• Agree timetable and scope of review
27 October 2020	Meeting to consider the Financial aspect: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unemployment and welfare benefits• Homelessness
10 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mental Health- Physical Health and Well Being• Note the consideration of the People survey.
2 February 2021	Meeting to consider the Community aspect: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support Services<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Council Services- External Organisations- Voluntary Sector
June 2021 – August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People survey
18 August 2021 & 14 September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To discuss format and content of final report
By email	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To agree the final recommendations and report for Scrutiny Committee – 21 September 2021
October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report to Scrutiny Committee• Review by Chief Executive• Report to Cabinet – 13 October 2021• People survey results published

5.5 Over the last 12 months the Group has established an evidence base which includes responses to the people survey, desk-based research, information collated through evidence sessions and review of actions taken by Melton Borough Council. A summary of the evidence considered is included in the report (Appendix A).

5.6 The Group have evaluated the evidence and translated their findings into a series of recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. The recommendations are included in full in the Final Report (Appendix A) and are summarised below:

- 5.6.1** That assurance is given to Scrutiny that the Council is being proactive in identifying and putting measures in place to prevent people from becoming homeless, with a particular emphasis on encouraging people to seek housing advice and support prior to them becoming homeless. This should take the following form:
- a) A proactive communications approach including a poster campaign (public facing communications that emphasises the need for people to contact the Council for advice and support as soon as possible and not when they have already become homeless).
 - b) A proactive communications approach that encourages landlords to contact the Council before they serve a notice, to see if we can work together to address any issues and stabilise the tenancy.
 - c) A proactive approach to engaging with landlords in the Borough (for example, through a landlords' forum).
 - d) Readily available information and guidance about how the Council can help and prevent homelessness from occurring to begin with (for example, negotiating with landlords, addressing underlying issues that have led to the tenancy being at risk, implementation of support to stabilise the tenancy).
 - e) An update report to the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time to demonstrate how successful the Council has been in preventing households from becoming homeless, and any lessons learned.
- 5.6.2** As soon as practicable, the Council and appropriate partners should host a Jobs Fair for people aged between 16 and 24. It is recommended that the jobs fair should include businesses, the DWP, Brooksby-Melton College, advice services and sign-posting.
- 5.6.3** Engagement with the lead officer for communications in respect to future Scrutiny studies where consultation and engagement may be required is crucial to ensure there is clarity on expectations, timescales and visibility/reach of consultation exercise.
- 5.6.4** We recommend that the Council host a Volunteer Fair to be held at Parkside with as much publicity as possible to encourage as many charitable companies, voluntary organisations and possible volunteers to attend.
- 5.6.5** The Council should review its existing processes to ensure that the digitally excluded have the same access to services as digitally competent residents have. In addition, the Council should work with partners (e.g. Age UK) to ensure that the digitally excluded have every opportunity to become digitally included if they choose. This could also be by increasing the help which the Council already provides in the computer suite at Phoenix House so that all residents, who wish, can obtain the necessary skills to access the internet. In addition, the Council should consider using the Government's Kick Start scheme, to employ a 16 to 24 year-old on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term employment, to help residents develop their digital knowledge (Age UK has a Digital Buddy training video which provides guidance).
- 5.6.6** The Council should review existing processes for monitoring its treatment of BAME residents and ensuring that BAME residents are treated fairly. This should include looking to make improvements where required.
- 5.6.7** A refresh of the Helping People Partnership:

- a) To ensure that the Helping People Partnership Board is representative of relevant partners who can deliver an effective and collaborative approach to health and wellbeing in Melton.
- b) To ensure that the Helping People Partnership Board incorporates Covid recovery/insights, needs and trends as a standing agenda item to enable collective understanding and action planning, relevant to the remit of the partnership.
- c) To ensure that the outcomes of the partnership are made available to scrutiny members with an update report in six months.

6 Options Considered

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Committee considered whether to approve the report and forward for Cabinet consideration or approve the report subject to specified amendments/additions. They concluded to approve the report without making any amendments or additions.
- 6.2 The Scrutiny Committee may approve the report and forward for Cabinet consideration, or they may approve the report subject to specified amendments/additions.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 A list of stakeholders and expert witnesses consulted is contained in the final report.
- 7.2 The Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement and the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities have been consulted prior to the publication of the report.
- 7.3 Some of the recommendations will require further consultation should they be approved and taken forward by Cabinet. Where appropriate this has been highlighted in the report.

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

- 8.1 Once Cabinet has considered the report and recommendations, their decision on whether to approve the report and accept the recommendations will be communicated to the Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.2 The results of the People Survey will be published on the Council's website.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 Any financial implications arising from the recommendations will be evaluated and further information will be provided to Cabinet in advance of consideration at the relevant Cabinet meeting in order to identify any cost implications and how these might be funded.

Financial Implications reviewed by: David Scott, Corporate Services Manager (Deputy s151 Officer)

10 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 The remit and operation of Task and Finish Groups and reports from the Scrutiny Committee are set out in Chapter 2, Parts 9 and 10 (Scrutiny Committee – Functions and Procedures) of the Melton Borough Council Constitution.
- 10.2 In accordance with the Constitution, Scrutiny Committee are able to provide recommendations to Cabinet, however Cabinet have the authority to approve, amend or reject the recommendations.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Natasha Taylor (Deputy Monitoring Officer) 08.10.21

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 11.1 Equalities implications arising out of the recommendations will be considered on a case by case basis.

12 Community Safety Implications

- 12.1 Any recommendations in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic response and recovery will be subject to regulations in place at the time of implementation.

13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 13.1 There are no environmental and climate change implications.

14 Risk & Mitigation

- 14.1 There are no risks associated with this report. The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to complement the significant amount of work already being undertaken by considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and highlighting any areas for improvement in relation to the response and recovery.

15 Background Papers

- 15.1 People Survey – Response Data

16 Appendices

- 16.1 Appendix A – Scrutiny Response and Recovery (People) Task and Finish Group Final Report

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