

REVIEW BY THE 2017/18 SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING & PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION IN OLDER RESIDENTS

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Philip Corthorne
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Social Services, Housing, Health and Wellbeing
Officer Contact(s)	Neil Fraser, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Final review report

HEADLINES

Summary	To receive a review by the previous Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee in 2017/18 which looked at the topic of loneliness and social isolation in older residents. The review makes some recommendations for Cabinet to consider.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People</i> .
Financial Cost	There are no direct financial costs arising from the initial recommendations, however, the report does suggest that additional activities would further benefit residents, which may not be covered from within the existing services base budget. Any additional costs would be identified as part of any future exploration of the recommended activities proposed in this report.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Social Care, Housing and Public Health.
Relevant Ward(s)	All.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet welcomes the Committee's findings from their review into loneliness and social isolation in older residents, and supports the recommendations outlined below:

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

1. The Committee concludes that Hillingdon Council has a unique and comprehensive strategy to improve the quality of life for Older People, which includes a broad range of activities to help combat loneliness and social isolation.
2. That the Committee support the Council's continued use of and promotion of TeleCare Line and technology to increase independence and reduce isolation of vulnerable people.
3. That the Committee welcomes the support to organisations such as the Bell Farm Christian Centre who undertake varied activities aimed at bringing older people together, noting that Ward Councillors have also provided support for one-off social activities for older people via the Ward Budget Initiative.
4. That the Committee fully backs the work of the Older People's Assembly to raise the profile of the support available to older residents.
5. That the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Housing, Health & Wellbeing explore as part of the Older People's Plan, some further initiatives and activities to enable older people to feel valued and engaged in Hillingdon, that may include:
 - a. Intergenerational activities with younger people through schools and local education establishments, the Scouts, and Duke of Edinburgh groups
 - b. Reading and life story sessions in libraries
 - c. Singing and music groups in schools
 - d. Promotion of volunteering opportunities
 - e. Spare Chair Scheme
 - f. Animal Therapy session with local organisations
 - g. Further befriending services
 - h. Men in Sheds schemes
 - i. Seated Exercise opportunities
6. That the Cabinet request officers review existing events to better incentivise attendance from male residents, based upon the initial data and feedback received by the Committee.

Reasons for recommendations

The recommendations of the review will enable the Council to further engage with older people and access existing and possibly new services and activities that may help to address any loneliness or social isolation. In addition, the recommendations will help to promote and incentivise wider attendance and engagement with older residents of the Borough.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

With a growing and vibrant elderly population, the London Borough of Hillingdon has had a long standing commitment to improve the quality of life for older residents.

The review by the Committee recognised that social isolation and loneliness can be a particular issue for older people for a variety of reasons. Members sought to better understand this, along with the varied activities and services the Council and other partners undertake to encourage social interaction among older people.

This matter has also gained national momentum in recent years. In early 2018, the Prime Minister appointed the first ever Minister for Loneliness, as part of the Commission for Loneliness formed by the late MP Jo Cox. The Commission has been working with 13 charities including Age UK and Action for Children to come up with ideas to address the problem of loneliness, and includes lunch clubs, activities, and workshops as well as a new Community Connections Programme to 'match up' volunteers with lonely people in the area.

During its information gathering and call-for-evidence sessions, the Committee considered it vital to take into account a wide range of views from the Council, partners, the voluntary sector and most importantly older people. This included a Member visit to Bell Farm Christian Centre to meet older residents and learn more about the activities they undertake to increase social engagement.

Concluding its review, the Committee was satisfied that London Borough of Hillingdon was supporting its older residents through an exceptionally robust and comprehensive portfolio of services and activities, which could be clearly seen in the Council's continued support of the Tele Care Line, community centres and its championing of older residents.

However, by its very nature, the difficulty in identifying and engaging with the most lonely and isolated residents of the Borough had been recognised as a challenge. As such, the Committee understood the importance of making services, activities and events as accessible as possible for older people, to encourage more social interaction.

The Committee has made some practical recommendations, including some new initiatives and activities which Cabinet Members may wish to explore, aimed at further engaging older people as part of the Older People's Action Plan. Finally, the Committee recommends that the Council reviews older male attendance at events, to ensure we are doing all we can to ensure we reach out to as many older people as possible.

Officer Comments on Recommendations where relevant

Officers note and welcome the Committee's primary findings that the Council has a strong focus on services and activities to support older people.

Subject to agreement by Cabinet and the Leader of the Council as Older People's Champion, officers could investigate further the implementation of the proposed new activities set out in Recommendation 5, for inclusion within the Older People's Action Plan.

Officers note that preliminary evidence by the Committee would suggest that male residents tend to be less engaged with local activities than female residents. It would be worthwhile exploring the reasons why this is the case in more detail, and reviewing the nature of events where necessary, to better incentivise attendance across the board.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial costs arising from the initial recommendations, however, the report does suggest that additional activities that would further benefit residents, which may result in minimal additional costs. These can be identified further as part of any future exploration of the recommended activities proposed in this report as part of the Older People's Action Plan.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The Committee's recommendations, if approved, will seek to improve the quality of life for older residents with new opportunities for people to engage with the Council and other residents, make friends and reduce the feelings associated with loneliness and social isolation.

Consultation carried out or required

The Committee sought a wide range of internal witness testimony, as set out in the report.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and confirms that there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation that Cabinet support the proposals of the Policy Overview Committee. As noted above a number of specific proposals would require funding over and above existing service budgets, however, it is anticipated such costs could be met from the Leader's Initiative for Older People or alternatively captured through the MTFF process.

Legal

Legal confirm that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL