

Agenda item: SC 27/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Services & Communities Committee

Wednesday 15th September 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee Early Years and Children Provision in Woughton policy Sept 2021.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes this report and the attached document.**
- 2. That the committee notes that:**
 - a. The statement that WCC will not provide early years provision has been altered to say that it is unlikely but is an option if no other is suitable.**
 - b. That there is an additional paragraph relating to childminders, as requested.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

At the last meeting, the Early Years and Children Provision position statement came for discussion and agreement. Whilst broadly supportive, there were two specific elements that were suggested to be changed, prior to formal agreement. They were:

- That the statement that excluded WCC from directly providing any early years provision was felt to be too restrictive and that there may be an occasion where this *might* be considered. As a result, the statement has been edited accordingly and now says:
As a local council, we will use all applicable powers to promote positive interventions within the parish but feel that directly providing early years provision (which we could provide using the General Power of Competency) is unlikely to be an appropriate route for the council to take. However, we will work with other providers to enable access to our community venues for the provision of this type of service and support providers, where appropriate, through use of council communications and similar, and do not exclude the possibility of direct provision if this is the only suitable option.
- That there should be something relating to childminders included within the document. There is now a section covering this, although information is limited regarding this type of provision within the parish.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Early Years and Children Provision in Woughton policy Sept 2021.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Early Years, Children and Education Provision in Woughton – July 2021

Introduction

Woughton comprises of seven residential estates (plus two industrial estates) in South Central Milton Keynes. It is an area of deprivation, if measured by government indices, but also has numerous strengths. With around 8,000 properties and a population of approximately 14,000, Woughton is home to a diverse community with differing and changing needs.

Woughton has the highest number of children of any ward in Milton Keynes. It also has the highest number of older people and members of BAME communities.

Contained within the parish are a number of schools, including primary (Langlands, New Chapter, Moorland and Falconhurst), secondary (MK Academy and St Pauls), MK College and a number of 'early years' providers, including Coffee Tots (charity) and nurseries based within Family Centres and schools. There are also specialist providers, such as Bridge Academy and Redway School. Local children also attend neighbouring parishes, in particular Charles Warren School on Groveway.

The parish is currently well represented for formal education providers but there have been concerns expressed about the lack of affordable, local early years provision. Whilst there are other providers based with large local employers (e.g. MK College, MK Hospital), this provision is mainly used by employees, rather than local people. There is also a significant lack of after school provision, with the exception of that provided via the Play Ranger service, which is more suitable for families and older children (mainly accessed by families and children over 7).

Since the first iteration of this paper, a new pre-school provision has opened at the Eaglestone Activity Centre and another was planned for Tinkers Bridge which, due to issues relating to the pandemic, has yet to start.

Woughton Community Council is committed to support the provision of local early years provision, high quality schools and colleges and the provision of 'lifelong' learning opportunities.

Primary Schools

As mentioned above, there are four primary schools within the parish boundaries, with a further school just outside the parish that is well used by Woughton residents. At time of writing (December 2018), two of the schools within the parish have been assessed by OFSTED as 'inadequate', meaning that there is a significant risk that one or both schools have action taken. These schools are Moorland on Beanhill and Langlands on Netherfield. Potential action could include:

- 'Academising' the schools, passing them to an academy trust to manage and, as a consequence, passing the buildings and land to a private organisation with the loss of that land to the local authority / local community
- Merger with another local school (may or may not be an academy trust)
- 'Break up' of the schools to maintain the early years / nursery provision (currently both assessed as 'good')
- Closure of one or both schools, with the long term loss of places for local people, at a time where there is significant potential for an increase in population, with Regeneration in the offing.

Woughton Community Council is committed to making representations to the local authority and education board to maintain local provision and improve performance to ensure high quality, locally based primary education across the parish.

The remaining schools (Falconhurst and New Chapter) are performing to a satisfactory level, but in the event that local schools face closure, are likely to face significant increases in demand for places, placing significant additional resource needs within those schools.

Since the first report was written, Falconhurst has undertaken significant redundancies, with key positions being reduced and a view that there has been a loss of expertise within the setting, alongside additional pressures on the remaining team.

Woughton Community Council is committed to working with ALL local schools to support their aims and objectives, ensure sufficient local places are available and maintain locally accessible primary education for all local people.

Secondary Schools

Woughton is home to MK Academy (the local secondary school for the catchments area) and St Pauls Catholic School, who offer a faith based education to both local and city wide (and beyond) children. Woughton Community Council has a good relationship with both these schools, but there is always more that can be done to improve these further.

Our Youth service works closely with secondary providers locally and, as a council, we offer opportunities for students of both schools to take part in community activities, bringing additional learning opportunities outside the formal educational settings. This includes the annual 'St Paul's Day' community events, involvement in our festival, music groups, access to our youth sessions, etc.

Both secondary schools are currently assessed as 'Good' by OFSTED, with the Academy in particular showing improvement.

Woughton Community Council is committed to continue to develop the relationships between the council and local secondary schools and will focus on this within the annual service plans each year. This will include development of a 'youth council', providing opportunities for local young people within the secondary provision to have direct influence on the activities, spending and priorities for the council.

Woughton Community Council is committed to support governing bodies, where appropriate, by providing a representative to sit as part of a governing body for any local school.

In addition to the secondary providers, MK College is also a significant player locally. The relationship with the college is excellent, with mutually beneficial activities happening, including placements for students within the services we deliver (e.g. community fridge) and delivery of specialist services by our youth team within the college setting (e.g. sexual health, LGBTQ+ peer support, music club).

Specialist Education

There are two specific providers of specialist education with the parish; The Bridge Academy and Redway School.

The Bridge Academy, based adjacent to our offices and youth building, provides education for young people who don't find mainstream secondary education suitable. Labelled as an 'Alternative Education Provider', the school works with young people who have, or are at risk of permanent exclusion from other schools. Working with smaller classes and focusing on a more personalised approach, the aims are to reduce the number of young people classes as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Assessed as 'Good' by OFSTED, Woughton Community Council works very closely with the school, offering a number of additional sessions (including street art, music and film making). Our Youth Manager sits on the board of governors.

The Redway School offers education to young people who have learning disabilities, including those on the autistic spectrum. Students at the school often have profound and multiple difficulties and the school provides a personalised approach to supporting students. Assessed by OFSTED as 'Good', the school works with students from across the city.

Our links to the Redway School are limited, but we are able to offer support when asked.

Woughton Community Council is committed to work with ALL educational providers within the parish, through provision of services, financial support (where appropriate) and by working to include all students within our services and activities. We will continue to build upon these strong relationships and

develop collective approaches to continue the valuable work undertaken by the specialist providers.

Early Years Providers

As mentioned in the introduction, there are a number of early years providers within the parish, including nurseries attached to schools and family centres, providers based within local employers and independent providers, including both private companies and charities.

Busy Bees, a private nursery company, have provision on Eaglestone, near the Saxon Clinic. This provision offers places for children aged 3 months to 5 years, with weekly costs of around £280 (10 hours per day, 5 days per week) or sessional costs (minimum 2 per week) of around £35.

Coffee Tots, a local charity, have provision next door to our Youth building on Coffee Hall. They open fewer hours (between 8.30am – 3.15pm, term time only, with a break at lunchtime) but are considerably cheaper (at £12 per session). They cater for 2 – 4 year olds.

The Early Years Nursery at MK College offers spaces for children aged 0 – 5 years. They offer sessional places or weekly 'school hours' options, with charges ranging from £25.20 per session through to £205 per week (for 5 days 'school hours' provision).

Milton Keynes Council offer nursery provision at both Hedgerows and Moorlands Family Centres, with provision being offered for children aged 0 – 5. The costs are around £1000 per month for full time provision, with costs of around £25 per session for part time needs.

All providers can offer some subsidised places through government funding, with the college also supporting people who are studying. Despite this, costs for many of our local residents are prohibitively expensive, meaning access to quality childcare, at the hours that are needed, is limited at best.

Woughton Community Council are pleased that there is now a provider in Eaglestone and will continue to look at ways of supporting other providers locally including one at Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place who was negatively impacted by the pandemic. Our aim is to provide other options for early years provision, encouraging providers to offer affordable sessions and times that support people to be able to maintain / take employment. This may include working to support existing providers or new providers coming into the parish.

Woughton Community Council are committed to supporting the delivery of early years provision through enabling access to our community buildings, supporting the publicising and marketing of said provision and, where appropriate, by working with providers to source additional funding and grants

to improve both the fabric of the buildings (where necessary) and the delivery of services.

Childminders

This is an area which is less well documented, due to the independent nature of the work. However, we know that there are many childminders, both registered and informal, who support suitable support for children. It is hard to find specific numbers, but <https://childcare.milton-keynes.gov.uk/> suggests that there are fewer than 10 registered within the parish.

There are also large numbers of 'family carers' – grandparents, uncles, aunts and others who are there when needed to enable parents to have support.

This is an area which might benefit from additional support and development – childminders can provide a flexible and affordable approach that sits well within the wider early years and childcare provision.

Other Children's Provision

Woughton Community Council provides a wide range of activities that are aimed at children and young people, including those sessions noted above where we work in partnership with local providers.

Our services include open access sessions on a number of estates, which compliment sessions run by the MKC Youth Team (currently on hold or unclear about the future), Play Ranger sessions throughout the year, specialist sessions for young people with specific needs and focused work around music, dance and the creative arts. Woughton Community Council provides significant funding towards this provision each year and continues to build upon what is an exceptional service locally. This includes investment in our Youth building (known as Number 95), continuing development of the Play Ranger service and a flexible approach to working in partnership with other agencies to bring much needed support to the parish. This includes the provision of some services that are 'whole city' support, enabling local young people easier access to these sessions (e.g. the Q Alliance youth group is supported and provided within the No 95 provision).

In addition to Woughton Community Council, there are also sessions provided by other organisations, such as the Milton Keynes Council Youth Team, Service Six, Children in Care Team, Children's Centres, Sports Network, Faith Groups and via the college and local secondary schools. Where possible, Woughton Community Council works alongside other agencies to reduce duplication, maximise resources and provide an integrated, targeted and focused approach to meet the wide and varied needs of local young people.

Woughton Community Council is committed to working in partnership with other local providers, bringing additional resources onto the parish and

working in a collaborative and positive way to maintain and increase opportunities for young people across the area.

Lifelong Learning

Whilst slightly outside the remit of 'children', lifelong learning opportunities should be considered when looking at education in its widest sense.

Previously, the Woughton Skills Ladder provided good local access to adult learning opportunities, focusing on basic skills, ESOL and similar. In addition, Adult Continuing Education, MK College and other organisations provided a range of both vocational and leisure education options. Whilst some of these remain in place, costs can be prohibitively high.

Woughton Community Council provides some opportunities, but these are mainly focused on local groups and individuals developing skills around their communities – managing meetings, food hygiene, first aid, etc. as opposed to 'open access' learning, focusing on personal development.

Woughton Community Council is committed to developing opportunities for local residents to be involved in lifelong learning, through direct provision, funding and support to other organisations and working to bring existing provision within the city to the parish, making access as easy as possible.

Conclusion

Woughton Community Council understands the importance and value of high quality, local and accessible education and early years provision. Additionally, offering opportunities for people to continue to learn and develop skills, employability skills and knowledge throughout their lives has clear social value. As such, Woughton Community Council is committed to supporting the provision of educational opportunities for all residents of the parish.

Early Years

As a local council, we will use all applicable powers to promote positive interventions within the parish but feel that directly providing early years provision (which we could provide using the General Power of Competency) **is unlikely to be** an appropriate route for the council to take. However, we will work with other providers to enable access to our community venues for the provision of this type of service and support providers, where appropriate, through use of council communications and similar, **and do not exclude the possibility of direct provision if this is the only suitable option.**

Primary, secondary and specialist education

As a local council, we have no powers around provision of schools as this sits with the principal authority, Milton Keynes Council. However, we are, as a council, committed to the provision of high quality, local schools for our residents. As such,

we will work in partnership with local schools, campaign, and support others to campaign for improvements to local schools, funding and other elements that benefit local residents. We will also, where appropriate, support local schools in providing resources (both financial and in terms of officer / member support) to increase opportunities and activities for students.

Lifelong Learning

As a local council, we can provide funding and support to enable access to education in its widest sense to our residents. To this end, we are committed to both supporting other agencies to provide opportunities and to provide direct provision, where appropriate, to increase the range and scope of options for local residents. This will include options for personal and professional development, provide additional support for people with specific needs (e.g. English as a second language, disabilities, etc) and include 'add on' support to assist people into employment, to improve their employment opportunities and to access further training, apprenticeships and similar.

Overarching Policy Statement

Woughton Community Council is committed to supporting the provision of early years, primary, secondary and lifelong educational opportunities across the parish. We will support this through campaigning and lobbying, through partnership and collaborative approaches and through direct support, either financial or through use of our other resources, to appropriate organisations and agencies.

Please note that this paper does not include information about youth services, but any approaches should work alongside and in collaboration with the Youth Service aims, making use of the skills and knowledge of that team where appropriate.

Agenda item: SC 29/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Services & Communities Committee

Wednesday 15th September 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To propose a special 'Chairs Awards' ceremony or similar, covering 'Covid Heroes' as well as the regular awards, to take place in 2022.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes this report.**
- 2. That the committee considers the proposal of a special Chairs Awards ceremony.**
- 3. That the committee considers what awards should be offered, what nomination process should take place and who judges the winners.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The Chairs Awards has not taken place for the past two years, due to the impact of restrictions relating to the Covid pandemic. Throughout this period, there have been individuals, groups and organisations that have gone above and beyond to support residents in Woughton.

As we move out of the restrictions (we hope) and into 2022, this event could be held and cover specific awards linked to the pandemic, alongside regular categories that would usually be covered. It is recommended that whilst Covid Heroes may be the main focus, life has continued outside this and other achievements should also be recognised.

It is recommended that this committee agrees to the proposal for a celebration and recognition event (the Chairs Awards) and considers the categories that they feel would be appropriate.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: SC 30/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Services & Communities Committee

Wednesday 15th September 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on actions, events and outcomes over the summer period.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes this report.**
- 2. That the committee recommends that officers review the information and plan services for 2022/23 accordingly, as part of the Service Planning process.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Since this committee last sat, the summer school holidays have taken place, with the 'Summer of Play' funding and provision of meals, the open air café, fridge, resident association events – whilst August is traditionally a 'quiet month' in local councils, this is certainly not the case at Woughton!

Summer of Play / Play Rangers

The 'Summer of Play' was a scheme supported by MKC where funding was available for one year only to deliver play and food over the last four weeks of the holidays (essentially during August). WCC made the decision to provide throughout the holidays, starting last week of July and extending this to a five-week period, providing play sessions and packed lunches each day.

Around 600 children attended sessions, with food provided / offered for each of them (some families also simply collected directly from CHMP).

The Annual Beach Party was a huge success, with hundreds of attendees enjoying a (rare) sunny day with loads of activities and a beach!

There were some issues with the range of activities that MKC funded being in competition with each other and different providers finding it difficult to effectively plan with the short timescales, different and new demands being made halfway through the funding and similar issues, but despite these challenges, we saw children and families across the parish enjoying play, food and activities (with only a few wet, or very wet (!) days). There was also considerable signposting and 'sign ups' to other provision that came from these sessions.

The usual sessions continued as well, with youth clubs, specialist services, etc. also provided.

Community Café / Community Fridge

These two projects continued as previously, with the fridge supporting the provision of the community café, which was held on the green space outside. This started as some councillors offering teas, coffees, cakes, etc. and developed into a cooked meal (thanks to Sue Smith and others for helping

with this – some lovely food prepared and served) and upwards of 70 / 80 visitors to the café, alongside the fridge.

Since restarting in July 2020, the fridge has now supported over 50 tonnes of food being redistributed and saved from going into landfill. This is an exceptional achievement and represents hundreds of thousands of meals and considerable reductions in carbon emissions being wasted. With a core group of volunteers managing most aspects of the fridge, this has become an excellent route for sharing information, keeping in touch with residents and building links to the community.

The cafe has now moved inside for the long-term provision, as planned in previous years but held up due to the impact of covid. With a new Café / Fridge Coordinator in post and a plan to develop and grow the café, this will help build upon the exceptional success of the last two summers outdoor offer.

Community Larder

As part of the 'food poverty' aspect of the service plan, there is now a 'Community Larder' that sits alongside the other options. This is a subscription service, where a weekly payment enables access to a range of food stuffs and other groceries (cleaning, personal care, etc.). The value of items is considerably higher than the payment and is a further option for people who may want to make their money go further. This is being held on a Wednesday alongside a café session and has seen a good start in terms of signups.

Landscaping

As this committee is aware, this year has been a challenging one for landscapers across the city and beyond. The weather has meant that growth has been exceptional, with many areas which we would usually cut once (as we are contracted to do), needing 2 / 3 / 4 cuts simply to keep on top of things. With some staff changes and absences and the impact of restrictions, alongside burglaries at the depot meaning loss of tools, there have been some difficulties.

To address this, the council agreed to both fill the vacancies AND offer some additional money to provide a short-term contract for an additional operative, to support a 'getting on top of things' approach, after the difficulties earlier in the year. This has been reflected in the positive feedback from residents and the continuation of the very quick responses to any urgent work needed.

Environment

We have continued to deliver the usual elements, whilst also supporting the wider delivery – offering some ‘green’ activities within the summer play sessions, information about the environment at engagement events and continuing work on the bigger projects, such as the community gardens. Enforcement remains a massive issue, with significant work being undertaken internally, only to fall when formal action is needed.

The land for the community gardens has now been transferred and a bid for fencing has gone in, alongside the larger bid to Big Lottery for the infrastructure and officer time.

Community Development

There have been a number of events that have taken place over the summer, with Resident Associations leading the way with some level of support from WCC. Coffee Hall had Kevin as a face painter, Tinkers Bridge had Steve as a roadie, Eaglestone had both of them as general gophers – all really successful events which reflect the hard work undertaken by the RA’s.

There are more events planned for the coming weeks and months – Tunnel to Tower and Pride weekend just gone, Apple Day coming up on the 25th, the art project throughout September- we are even planning the Santa Sleigh routes and dates. Watch this space.

Generally, the summer has been a busy but productive period with some excellent work undertaken in what has been reasonably difficult circumstances. There is, as always, learning to take from the experiences and, as part of the team development sessions, we will look at what worked well, what were the challenges and what we can do to build upon these successes.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Services & Communities Committee

Wednesday 15th September 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on forthcoming events.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes this report.**
- 2. That the committee agrees to:**
 - a. The proposal that we investigate the potential for a Carnival to commemorate the jubilee in 2022.**
 - b. Whether this is instead of or as well as a Festival.**
 - c. What other events would be suggested / recommended / wanted.**
 - d. Whether there is a recommendation for a budget for each event, or an increase in the 'events' budget line, to enable effective budget planning for the coming year.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following a period of relatively few events, due to the restrictions that have been in place, the council is now in a position to be making some more concrete plans for the future and developing approaches to delivering community events, both in 2021 and into next year.

We have seen some smaller scale events over the past few months; beach party was a great success, the Resident Association events have been brilliant and diverse and the regular weekly social contact events (café, craft group, etc.) are all either started or will be starting over the coming weeks.

Larger scale events that the council is either delivering or supporting include:

- 11th September – Tunnel to Tower run, with Bucks Fire and Rescue
- 11th September – MK Pride (we are supporting by provision of equipment, including the trailer)
- 25th September – Apple Day – at the Hub between 11am – 3pm ish
- 28th September – Home Art event – Beanhill
- 29th September – Home Art event – Netherfield

October sees Halloween and November has Diwali (4th), Bonfire Night (5th) and Remembrance (plans are being made, but we haven't had any confirmation of what might be suitable this year).

There is also the Blue Light Walk – this has yet to be clarified and it is important that the people who have agreed to create this event meet soon to start planning.

The Santa Sleigh will take place during the week of 14th – 18th December, with Resident Associations making plans to work around the Sleigh.

2022 sees further opportunities – a suggestion that we might want to bring back Carnival for the Queens Jubilee, plus the real chance that we will be back to Festival and the other events, plus new ideas, that haven't quite happened this year (or indeed, last year).

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

As with most events, there is an impact on staff who will support and take the time back when there is a chance. Where necessary, volunteers can also be called upon and, as is always the case, councillors are involved too.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Events can be expensive, so acknowledging that there is a limit to what can be done within the budget allocated is important. However, the committee may wish to lobby for an increase in the budget for 2022/23 to enable a wider array of events to take place, especially if Carnival is happening as this has previously been expensive.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Having had two years where things haven't happened as they usually would, the end of 2021 and the coming year (2022) will, we hope, bring a greater sense of normality and enable us to be back out with the larger events.

The Resident Association events that have taken place over the past couple of months have shown that there is a desire for these to happen again and that they can be delivered safely, especially outdoors.

Planning and preparation is well in hand, but agreement from this committee as to what would be preferred / wanted would be helpful.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager