

Record of Key Issues From The Senior Peoples Forum Held on the 2nd of February 2010 Howden Park Centre

Draft Record of Previous Meeting

Accepted as being accurate.

Matters Arising From Previous Meeting Not On Agenda

Constitution

Amendments requested as follows:

- 9.7 change to read senior people not older people as stated.
- 10.2 agenda / notice of meeting to be issued no less than 14 days before next meeting rather than 7 days as stated
- 12.1 issues to be placed on the agenda no less than 21 days before meeting rather than 14 days as stated

Web Page

Clarification was sought as to whether this had been created. Was confirmed a web page for the Senior Peoples Forum was now available on the Council Web Site and could be accessed by following the link from the menu under Health and Social Care. Web page for the Forum was also contained within the Community Health and Community Care Partnership web site.

Agenda Items

Vice Chair

Noted the election of a Vice Chair would take place at the next meeting of the Senior People's Forum in June. Anyone interested in the position should forward a 150-word biography outlining what he or she would bring to the position to Jillian Dougall based at the Civic Centre in the first instance. This will then be circulated along with the agenda prior to the next meeting to allow those who attend the next meeting to make an informed choice as to whom they would wish to elect.

Income Maximisation Programme

Update was given by Alan Cunningham on progress to date. Was noted that the week prior £950,000 in additional income had been secured for those pensioners living on low incomes. Hence were going to exceed the target £1million pound originally identified for the project being run between October 2009 and March 2010.

Question was raised as to whether benefits were backdated? – was confirmed any benefits awarded were only backdated to the date of application.

Question was raised as to whether everyone was entitled to a heating allowance in light of the cold weather? – no if above a certain income level.

Question was asked as to whether the Forum was not also representative of those who are not eligible to receive benefits? – was confirmed the Forum was set up to represent senior people from across the board.

Question was raised with regards to the 68 forms required to claim various benefits, could West Lothian Council not lobby for the number of forms to be reduced? – was explained that the associated forms had been simplified and much of the information required was necessary to account for expenditure and the prevention of fraudulent claims. However if there was a view that further change was necessary the public

needed to lobby and bring pressure on the government to change the current benefit system.

Was identified by a member that it would be beneficial for the Income Maximisation Programme to link in with faith groups to help identify those likely to benefit. Was agreed this would be taken forward.

Way Forward

Councillor Hutton gave an outline of the Councils proposal to create an Older Peoples Challenge Fund of £300,000 to be used for initiatives, which would improve the wellbeing and opportunities available to older people living in West Lothian.

Highlighted that there was no new money that could be identified to create the Challenge Fund hence it would require existing funding to be redirected to support this proposal. The use of the £10 winter bonus being an option as £10 was not in itself going to change the life of an older person, however to aggregate the £10 bonus across West Lothian would generate approximately £270,000 which could then be used to support new initiatives which could bring life changing results via the Challenge Fund.

Those in attendance then attended three breakout groups to consider the following:

- Was there support in principle for the creation of a Challenge Fund?
- Was there support for the £10 bonus to be used to create a Challenge Fund?
- Was there support for the Challenge Fund to be used for a Pensioners Income Maximisation Programme?
- Was there any other initiatives that a Challenge Fund might be used for which would benefit older people?

Collective Feedback from the Groups was as follows:

- All were supportive of the creation of a Challenge Fund in principle.
- Two out of the three break out groups were in agreement that the winter bonus should be used for the creation of a Challenge Fund
- The other group did not agree with this proposal viewing it as the “thin end of the wedge”, wished new money to be made available to create a Challenge Fund.
- Feedback from a delegate from the 50+ Network made reference to a previous consultation undertaken by the Network
- Two of the three groups agreed the Challenge Fund should be used to support an Income Maximisation Programme
- Two of the three groups agreed the Challenge Fund should be used to support the creation of a Food Train
- Two of the three groups identified other initiatives they would wish to see supported by a Challenge Fund – namely a gardening service, access to a pool of volunteer tradesmen, creation of community secretaries, social engagements programme for older people, improved access for disabled people.

Meeting was closed by Councillor Hutton, with everyone present being thanked for their contribution to the discussions and for sharing their views and opinions.

Venue

Highlighted there was the option of looking at alternative venues to host the next meeting however there were certain requirements that would have to be met by any alternative proposals put forward.

In particular the venue had to be accessible for anyone with a disability, have a public address and loop system, have catering facilities, be reasonably priced, be able to accommodate upwards of 70 people and have breakout rooms available.

No suggestions were put forward at the meeting.

Confirmed the date of the next meeting had been scheduled for the 8th of June from 1pm – 4pm.