

Reference Group on Older People

Tuesday, 5th November, 2019

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REFERENCE GROUP ON OLDER PEOPLE

Members present: Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors McMullan and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. D. Connolly, City Protection Manager
Mrs. G. McEvoy, Senior Environmental Health Officer;
Mrs. E. Greer, Senior Project Development Officer; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Groves.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd August, 2019 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation on Positive Ageing Month

The Senior Environmental Health Officer provided the Reference Group with an update on the range of events and success associated with the launch of Positive Ageing Month which had been launched on 1st October, 2019. She reported that 98% of the attendees had felt connected and that it had provided a sense of engagement and sense of purpose for those who had taken part in the various events. The Senior Environmental

Health Officer highlighted a number of events which had proved particularly popular including:

- The Fire and Rescue Service Open Morning;
- Get on Line Week; and
- The Slipped Disco, held in the Black Box

The Reference Group acknowledged and thanked the officers for their work in arranging the diverse range of events on offer and asked if measures could be put in place to encourage minority participation at the various events on offer. In response, it was reported that there was currently minority engagement at the various events on offer but acknowledged that other avenues might be explored to encourage other underrepresented groups including the Syrian community. In response to a further question from a Member in respect of how Councillors might engage with the older people, the Reference Group was advised that the current use of social media and City Matters in particular had proved successful but would be happy to explore other options which might be available.

In response to a question from a Member in respect of specific events at City Council leisure centres targeted specifically for older people, the Reference Group was informed that GLL had appointed a member of their staff specifically to deal with older people and address their needs.

The City Protection Manager stated that he would request that GLL be invited to the next meeting of the Reference Group at which they could outline the specific leisure programmes which they had designed and targeted for older people.

Noted.

Update on Age-friendly Belfast Pharmacy Charter

The Senior Project Development Officer provided an update on the development and launch of the Age-friendly Belfast Pharmacy Charter. She reported that the Charter under the auspices of the Age-friendly Belfast plan 2018-2021 was one of the actions to improve access to a range of health and social care services to help maintain and improve the physical and mental health of older people. She stated that it was important the older people were provided with better access to GP services, pharmacies and dental practices

and the pharmacies were the first group targeted in the process of making them more Age-friendly.

The Reference Group was provided with an outline of some of the physical impediments which made access to pharmacy services difficult for older people. The Healthy Ageing Coordinator reported that for the past six months Belfast City Council had worked with a range of pharmacy representatives, older people, the Health Social Care Board, the Alzheimer's Society and Belfast Healthy Cities to adopt an Age-friendly Belfast Charter and that two local pharmacies had been involved in a pilot study as part of that process. It was reported that the Age-friendly Belfast Charter had been launched on 8th October, 2019 which had been attended by the Chairperson of the Reference Group, Alderman Copeland, and that the Members were encouraged to work with their local pharmacies to promote the charter and secure their participation in that process.

The Senior Project Development Officer, in response to a question from a Member, agreed that she would provide the Reference Group a list of pharmacies by District Electoral Area to facilitate that process and also seek to provide dementia training for the newly elected Members of the Council.

Noted.

Greater Belfast Seniors Forum

One of the Neighbourhood Services Manager attended in connection with this item and to address members of the G6 group who were in attendance, both of whom were welcomed by the Chairperson.

The City Protection Manager City Protection Manager provided an update on the work and structure of the G6 which comprised of six area forums. The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided an outline of the background to the establishment of Neighbourhood Services including the recognition that citizens required a single point of contact to have their concerns addressed. She highlighted the need to deliver positive outcomes for older people and the priorities contained within the Belfast Agenda and of the need to focus on the needs of the customer. The Neighbourhood Services Manager agreed that the four Area Neighbourhood Services Managers would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Reference Group to provide information on their roles and responsibilities, including the services they provided for the community. It was also agreed that the Area Managers would make arrangements to attend each of the forums in their areas.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Reference Group, thanked the Neighbourhood Services Manager for her presentation and she departed from the meeting.

Members of the G6 provided the Reference Group with an update on their work with particular reference to addressing the areas of poverty, transport mental health and health. The importance of information sharing amongst external stakeholders and statutory agencies were identified as key to providing a solution to the complex issues identified within the aforementioned categories. Access to food banks and raising the profile associated with benefits take-up was referred specifically by the G6 Group. The Chairperson suggested that it might be helpful if Advice NI could liaise directly with the G6 Group and develop criteria which could be used to facilitate to foodbanks.

The City Protection Manager agreed that he would invite an appropriate Council officer to the next meeting to provide information on the Councils role in dealing with this issue.

The Reference Group was informed that the issue of mental health and social isolation remained significant problems within the Province and outlined some of the actions taken to reduce their impact. The City Protection Manager identified the use of loneliness maps which could be utilised to target those areas of the city and individuals who were particularly at risk due to isolation and loneliness. The Chairperson suggested that the Council should continue to highlight the issue of loneliness in its City Matters publication, including advice and guidance for those individuals identified as being at risk.

At this point the discussion in the matter was suspended owing to the fact that the meeting was inquorate.

Chairperson