

## Health and Wellbeing Board

**Meeting Date:** 12 November 2020

**Paper title:** Harnessing COVID-19 Support across Shropshire

**Responsible Officer:** Julia Baron, CEO, Shropshire Rural Communities Charity (RCC)

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### 1. Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for an incredible amount of community support and the people of Shropshire have really “stepped up” to help those in their neighbourhood who faced significant disadvantage.

We wanted to capture that community spirit and enthusiasm before volunteer fatigue set in and we also wanted to know whether groups that had spontaneously sprung up had ambition to continue, and if so, what help they might need to become stronger and more sustainable.

A survey of groups was conducted in July/August to capture the extent of the Covid19 community activity and to understand the development needs of the groups

Sixty-seven of an estimated 120 groups responded and this report sets out their detailed responses about their activity during the pandemic, whether they intend to continue, what challenges they faced and what help they might need going forward.

Some of the highlights are:

- At least 64% of the groups had a main focus around immediate, practical help to those in their community who were shielding, vulnerable or disadvantaged
- 91% of the respondents plan to continue to operate after the immediate pandemic crisis has passed although of those, 27% have said that they won't do everything that they have been doing
- 51% feel that they need some help to continue operating

Based on these early findings Shropshire RCC secured a small amount of Lottery funding to provide extra support to those groups that need it until the end of March 2021.

### 2. Recommendations

It is imperative that whilst harnessing the huge amount of willingness, enthusiasm and community spirit which delivered these vital activities across our county, that a balance is found to allow the various aspects of these groups to be sustainable in the long term, whilst remaining agile enough to respond in a crisis.

1. Groups need to grow and develop organically, – they don't want to be “organised” or controlled” or “directed” by Statutory organisations as to who they should help and how they should operate

2. Groups want to be operating safely and the community needs them to operate safely. Training and support (e.g. help to understand the DBS system and a mechanism to get requisite DBS checks done) is required so that group members understand the responsibilities and risks, involved and the community members have confidence in using the services
3. Groups have operated on the tiniest of budgets, but this can't continue indefinitely. Small grants to assist with direct costs will help unlock the volunteer time needed
4. Infrastructure support from trusted advisers should be available to any group that needs it. This is currently being funded by the small Lottery funding, but this is a stop gap. Without this, ongoing support will not be available.

The Board is asked to note the contents of the report.

## **REPORT**

Please see the full report 'Harnessing COVID-19 support across Shropshire'.

- 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**  
(NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)
- 4. Financial Implications**
- 5. Background**
- 6. Additional Information**
- 7. Conclusions**

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
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RCC report - Harnessing COVID-19 Support across Shropshire
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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b>
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<b>Local Member</b>
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<b>Appendices</b>
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