MEETING TITLE AND DATE Cabinet – 12 March 2019 Health and Wellbeing Board – 20 March 2019	Agenda - Part: 1	Item: 8
	Subject: Loneliness and Social Isolation Scrutiny Workstream - Report and Recommendations **Wards: All** **Key Decision No: N/A**	
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a covering report for the final report of the Loneliness and Social Isolation Scrutiny Workstream attached as appendix A. It summarises the findings of the workstream review and puts forward recommendations for agreement.

The impact of loneliness and social isolation is a growing public health issue. There is a large amount of evidence that loneliness has a huge impact on health, physical as well as mental. It is a risk factor for early death and its impact can be equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It can affect anyone at any time. It is also expensive and can cost up to £6,000 per person in health costs and on pressure on local services.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up the workstream last year to look at how the Council addresses the loneliness and social isolation issue and to find out what more the Council could do to lessen its impact.

This was an issue that cuts across all Council departments. Officers from public health, adult social care, children's psychotherapy, libraries, voluntary and community strategy, housing, arts and culture were invited to workstream meetings to discuss the issues. Evidence was also gathered from a wide range of articles on the topic. Members found that one of the best ways of tackling loneliness was by bringing people together was through shared activities and events.

The final recommendations include proposals for the Council: to take account of the social impact of Council decisions in a similar way to equalities; to provide opportunities for people to interact socially while taking part in activities in the borough; to provide central source of information for the many clubs and activities that are taking place in Enfield; to encourage schools to deliver relationship education to help young people deal with the damaging impacts of social media; to make council buildings more open and welcoming; to encourage people to be friendlier, more engaged in their communities and to set up a volunteering scheme for the council's own staff.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the recommendations put forward in the review and note the responses provided by Directors and Executive Directors in Appendix A.

3.   BACKGROUND

Responding to the growing awareness of the damage loneliness can cause, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a workstream to consider how we as a Council address the issue of loneliness and social isolation and to find out what more the Council could do to alleviate its impact.

Loneliness has been found to be as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It is a factor in heart disease, cancer and can lead to dementia. Although traditionally associated with older people it is also a problem for younger people. Suicide is the leading cause of death among men in their 40's.

Troublingly those who are lonely when young are more likely to suffer bouts of loneliness throughout their lives and to die young. Anyone can be affected. Key life events such as having a baby, moving to a new area, becoming unemployed and suffering bereavement made people more susceptible. It is a growing problem as people are living more isolated lives and there was felt to be an increasingly negative impact of social media, particularly on younger people.

Loneliness is also expensive in terms of the cost of long term health problems and pressure on local services. Researchers have put a financial price on the "epidemic of loneliness" estimating that it costs £6,000 per person for each decade of an older persons' life. For every pound spent preventing loneliness, there are £3 worth of savings according to the Campaign to End Loneliness.

The workstream focussed on what the Council could do to prevent loneliness and social isolation. They saw it as an issue not confined to one area, but which cut across all Council departments. They invited officers from public health, housing, community engagement, child psychotherapy, libraries, arts and culture to a series of five meetings in the first half of the year. They also looked at a large amount of written evidence, as listed in the bibliography to the report.

Members found that although the Council had been doing some work to tackle loneliness up until now it had not been a major consideration in designing Council policies and there was much more that could be done. They felt that the work that was already taking place in some areas could be developed further and that the Council should consider the impact council policies could have on loneliness and social isolation.

The evidence revealed that one of the best ways to tackle loneliness was to bring people together through shared activities and to provide opportunities for them to take part in social and cultural activities and events, in the local area.

Members also recognised the importance of place, community and a sense of belonging to people's mental health and the value in promoting activities to make people who live in Enfield feel that they belong, that Enfield is a good place to live.

The workstream has put forward 11 recommendations which seek to address these issues:

1.1   To assess the impact that all Council policies can have in increasing or alleviating loneliness and social isolation. All Council reports should include a paragraph assessing the social impact of decisions. This could be included in the section for public health implications in the Council's report template.

1.2   To work with schools to provide more relationship education (educating young people about the dangers of social media) within the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) curriculum and to encourage young people in secondary schools to take part in activities outside of school including volunteering.

1.3   To develop a focus for activities in each ward equivalent to a village hall or an "indoor town square". This could be by encouraging the development of libraries, arts centres, heritage assets and other council buildings as community hubs across the borough with community notice boards to make full use of their community rooms and public spaces as a facility for encouraging community engagement. This could be started by setting up a pilot project in one ward to build a centre of community focus, possibly in a library, organising activities and providing information about all the activities taking place within the ward.

1.4   To create an environment that encourages more local people to come out in the evening to sit in cafes, have a drink and meet friends and family in the borough's town centres. This could be done by encouraging alternative, community based, uses for the empty town centre shops, making better use of the market square and allowing restaurants to have more tables out on the pavements as in Central London and other European cities.

1.5a   To continue to ensure that all Council buildings are people friendly, open, accessible, and welcoming.

1.5b   To ensure that staff are trained to be active listeners and responders; as well as finding solutions that encourage the widest community participation.

1.6   To create a Council database of all clubs and activities taking place in Enfield and to make this readily available in all council buildings, libraries and on the Council website, to all staff who have contact with the public and including partners such as the health authorities, the police and the voluntary sector so that they can use it as a tool to encourage people to take part in activities that they could be interested in and which would encourage social interaction.

1.7   To run a publicity campaign to encourage people to make Enfield a friendlier place to make people aware of the importance of being more open, friendly

and of looking out for their neighbours and the people they meet day to day in the neighbourhood. Even the smallest amount of human interaction – saying hello to someone in the street - has been proven to prevent people suffering from loneliness.

1.8   To run an online publicity campaign advertising the many clubs and activities taking place in the borough including organising an open day for local clubs.

1.9   To develop a volunteering scheme allowing all council staff to spend two days a year volunteering in the community. The London boroughs of Lambeth, Brent, Barking and Dagenham offer their staff three days and Barnet 2 days. Private sector organisations such as John Lewis and NatWest also run schemes.

1.10   To work to find sources of seed funding for initiatives such as men's sheds, makerspaces and other projects to promote social interaction and improve community cohesion: investing start-up funds in projects with community health benefits such as Good Gym, Big Lunch, community litter clearances, and Soup.

1.11   To monitor the implementation of these recommendations through regular feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.   ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None

5.   REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The reasons for the recommendations are included in the report.

6.   COMMENTS OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1   Financial Implications

Any costs of implementing these recommendations are expected to be met from existing budgets. The outcomes from these recommendations should help to mitigate against the escalating budget pressures associated with loneliness and isolation in the borough.

6.2   Legal Implications

In January 2018 the Government announced a programme of work on tackling loneliness. The Prime Minister welcomed the work of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, which had carried forward the good work started by the late Jo Cox MP.

It sets out commitments from 9 Government departments, as well as commitments to work with businesses, employers, local authorities, health and the voluntary sector.

The recommendations, following the work of the Loneliness and Social Isolation Scrutiny workstream review, support the recent government strategy *'A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness - laying the foundations for change'*, published on 15 October 2018. This is the first strategy for tackling loneliness in England. It marks a shift in the way we see and act on loneliness, both within government and across society. It builds on years of work by many individuals and organisations, and acts as government's first major contribution to the national conversation on loneliness and the importance of social connections. This strategy calls on local authorities to consider how tackling loneliness can be embedded in the strategic planning and decision-making on the well-being of the community. Examples of strategic planning are Health and Well Being and other Boards and addressing practical issues around community space and transports, as set out in this report. The strategy recognises the crucial role of local authority leaders and councillors in bringing together public, private and social sectors to support communities in tackling loneliness. In January 2018 the Government announced a programme of work on tackling loneliness. The Prime Minister welcomed the work of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, which had carried forward the good work started by the late Jo Cox MP.

7. KEY RISKS

The recommendations set out by the workstream above aim to mitigate:

- The risk the Council does not take account of the impact that their policies could have which could lead to increasing loneliness and isolation.
- The risk of significant pressure on the Council's limited resources due to increased costs in managing and addressing loneliness and isolation.

And enhance the opportunities to:

- Promote existing activities and cultural events currently taking place in the borough.
- Promote community activities to young people
- Create a more welcoming and inclusive borough community

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES - CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee uses focused, time-limited workstreams to scrutinise Council decisions and services that impact on the successful delivery of the Council's key priorities. The workstreams collect evidence, draw conclusions and make recommendations to improve effectiveness and ensure value for money.

8.1 Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods

The recommendations will encourage people to play a wider part in and improve the connectedness of their local communities.

8.2 Sustain strong and healthy communities

A sustainable community is one where everyone feels supported and opportunities are provided for people improve their health and wellbeing.

The implementation of the recommendations will make Enfield a healthier and more attractive place to live.

The recommendations in the report will strengthen local communities by bringing people together to help and support each other.

8.3 Build our local economy to create a thriving place

Enfield will become a more prosperous and attractive place to live if people if people feel more connected to it.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Corporate advice has been sought in regard to equalities and an agreement has been reached that an equalities impact assessment is neither relevant nor proportionate for the approval of this report to approve the Loneliness and Social Isolation Scrutiny Workstream.

However it should be noted that projects or work stream deriving from this may be subject to a separate Equalities Impact Assessment. Therefore, any projects or work stream will be assessed independently on its need to undertake an EQIA to ensure that the council meets the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Workstream recommendations are reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who monitor the progress and effectiveness in implementing the recommendations. This complements service performance management arrangements.

11. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Loneliness and social isolation is a public health issue. Not addressing the issue could have a negative impact on mental and physical health. Interventions to reduce loneliness should be evidence-based and recognise that it is often not a lack of awareness that drives loneliness but can include the stigma of attending events as a solo individual. More widely Enfield should take note of cities which have sought to increase incidental social interaction through the built environment. Including loneliness as a separate

paragraph in every report is unlikely to be useful as this will be included in public health implications where appropriate.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Response to recommendations by Executive Directors and Directors

Appendix B - Full Report of the Loneliness and Social Isolation Scrutiny Workstream