

Reference Group on Older People

Tuesday, 20th March, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REFERENCE GROUP ON OLDER PEOPLE

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor S. Copeland, and Alderman L. Patterson.

In attendance: Mrs S. Toland, Assistant Director, City and Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. D. Connolly, Environmental Health Manager;
Mrs. G. McEvoy, Senior Environmental Health Officer;
Mrs. E. Greer, Healthy Ageing Coordinator; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Groves.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st September, 2017 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were reported.

Older Volunteer of the Year Awards – 2017

Ms. T. Mawhinney, Community Development Officer, attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Community Development Officer provided the Reference Group with an update on the role of the Older Volunteer Awards, including the platform which they provided to allow both groups and organisations to pay tribute and recognise formally, the efforts of older volunteers and their contribution to community life

The Reference Group was provided with a list of the five categories under which awards were accredited, including those individuals who had been recognised formally in respect of each category. It was reported that the volunteer awards had been delivered in partnership with Community Services and Age-friendly Belfast, with support provided by Volunteer Now and Belfast 89 FM. She outlined also the significant work undertaken by volunteers in making a difference to community life.

The Reference Group acknowledged the work which had been undertaken by older volunteers in support of their communities and offered its congratulations to those individuals who had been successful under the various nomination categories.

Update on Age-friendly Belfast

The Environmental Health Manager reminded the Reference Group that the Council had completed the first delivery cycle of the 2014-2017 Age-friendly Action Plan and reported that the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (H.A.S.P.) was in the process, currently, of updating the Age-friendly baseline, including the development of a new 3 year 2018-2021 Action Plan. He reported that it was anticipated that the new Action Plan would be presented to both the Belfast Strategic Partnership and that the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May, 2018, prior to the undertaking of a 12 week consultation period. He reported that it was intended that the new Action Plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Reference Group, scheduled to take place in June, 2018. He referred to the leadership and promotion of the city associated with Belfast becoming an Age-friendly, supported by the Reference Group, and which was now incorporated within the Council's Belfast Agenda.

The Environmental Health Manager provided the Reference Group with an update on the results of the baseline data, which had identified improvements in regard to how older people felt in respect to how the city had assisted them in meeting their full potential. He reported also on the links between deprivation, ill health and social isolation and highlighted also the need to target resources to reduce life inequalities throughout the city. In response to concerns from the Reference Group in regard to the short time-scale that relatives, living in accommodation where the tenant had deceased, were allocated by Housing Associations to vacate their accommodation, the Assistant Director stated that the matter raised by the Members was the responsibility for The Department for Communities, in conjunction with The Northern Ireland Housing Executive. She agreed to relay the concerns of the Members to the appropriate authority, and report back in the matter at a future date. The Reference Group was reminded that the new Age-friendly Action Plan would be launched at the Age-friendly Belfast Convention, scheduled to take place in the City Hall, on 1st October, 2018,

Noted

Review of Positive Ageing Month

The Senior Environmental Health Officer provided the Reference Group with an overview of the October 2017 Positive Ageing Month, including the learning which had been gained from the events undertaken as part of that initiative. She reported that over 200 events, involving in excess of 50 organisations, had taken place and that the events had made a significant positive impact on tackling the issues of health, well-being and social isolation experienced by older people. It was reported that, prior to the events taking place, City Matters had not been published and was the main method for communications with older households.

The Members requested that, given the importance of this mode of communication particularly for older people, that the Head of Corporate Communications be advised of the significant negative impact for Older People in regard to the non-publication of the September edition of City Matters and referred specifically to its use as a medium for the publication and communication of Council events. She stated further that she would raise the matter with the Head of Corporate Communications. The Senior Environmental Health Officer referred to the cost to the Council of organising the various events associated with the Positive Ageing Month, which was approximately £8,000, and that the initiative and

the events attached to it had received positive feedback, from both community organisations and from older people, in particular.

Noted.

Update on Age-Friendly Belfast Events

The Senior Environmental Health Officer provided an update on the various Age-friendly events which had been held between December, 2017 till March, 2018. She highlighted the range of events which had taken place and referred to the popularity of the tea dances, and "Be Prepared" events, in particular.

Noted

Update of Age-friendly Network for Northern Ireland

The Healthy Ageing Co-ordinator provided the Members with an update on the progress which had been made to date in regard to the establishment of an Age-friendly Network for Northern Ireland. She stated that six out of the eleven Councils had given a public commitment to adopt an Age-friendly approach, including the implementation of Age-friendly plans within their respective areas. She referred to the benefits of adopting a regional Age-friendly approach, including amongst other things, the promotion of good practice in terms of services and support for older people. She informed the Members that, the adoption of an Age-friendly network was supported and promoted by Age Northern Ireland, The Public Health Agency and The Department for Communities.

The Reference Group noted the information which had been provided

Update on Age Section Platform

The Senior Environmental Health Officer provided the Reference Group with information in respect of the establishment of the Age Sector Platform. She referred to plans to hold local Pensioners' Parliaments in each of the eleven Council areas and provided information in regard to the Belfast Pensioners' Parliament which had been held on 9th March, 2018 in the City Hall. She gave the Reference Group a brief overview of their roles and responsibilities of the Pensioners' Parliaments, in the provision of a platform for the identification and debate of both, local and regional issues, affecting older people.

Noted

Date of Next Meeting

The Reference Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 12th June at 12:30 p.m.

Chairperson

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