Scrutiny Report on Preventing Elderly Isolation City Executive Board Tuesday 23 January 2018

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

To:	City Executive Board
Date:	23 January 2018
Report of:	Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report:	Preventing Elderly Isolation

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations on preventing elderly isolation
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of Scrutiny
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Dee Sinclair, Culture and Communities
Corporate Priority:	Strong Active Communities
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan

Recommendation(s):That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report

Appendices
None

Introduction and background

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered a report by the Head of Community Services on preventing elderly isolation at a meeting on 5 December 2017. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Dee Sinclair, Board Member for Culture and Communities, and Dave Growcott, Acting Communities Manager, for attending the meeting to inform the Committee's discussion.

2. Councillor Sinclair said the request from the Committee for this report was timely and thanked Dave Growcott for his work on it. She said that the balance of old and younger people in the City is atypical because of the size of the student population but the older population was both significant and growing. While the City Council had a role in making provision for older people it was by no means the only provider and, indeed, the burden of responsibility fell elsewhere.

Summary and recommendations

3. It was noted with regret that society is generally less protective towards older people than it has been in the past (and as it remained in some communities and some parts of the world). Social isolation is "corrosive" and cuts to services such as community transport have not helped. There was broad agreement that there is a shared and collective community responsibility for the welfare of older people. The Committee commented that one of the Council's key means of engaging with older people is through Councillors' day to day constituency work.

4. The Committee noted that the report provided a useful account of services and support available through the City Council that can help to prevent isolation but was relatively silent on the question of how to engage with isolated older people in the first place, given that these people are, by definition, hard to reach. It was noted that whilst the Council must strive to make activities ever more accessible, lifting people out of entrenched isolation is a function of the County Council - even though their budgetary challenges mean they probably can't do this as well as they would like.

5. The Committee identified that the Council could make better use of census and other data to identify any geographical concentrations of older people as well as any gaps in provision. This would give the Council a better view of how well it is identifying and engaging with older people.

   Recommendation 1: That consideration is given to how the Council could obtain a clearer view of how to identify and engage with older people who are isolated or at risk of isolation. The former should include the use of population data for different parts of the city to identify any geographical concentrations of older people and gaps in provision.

6. The Committee noted that some elderly people have little or no engagement with ICT and proper account needs to be (and is) taken of this in communicating with them. Community newsletters were recognised as being a particularly good means of engaging with older people however the production and distribution of community newsletters is very resource intensive. The City's Community Centres also had the potential to play a more significant role through, for example, the promotion of activities or the use of centres by groups including women and BAME communities which might otherwise not engage.

   Recommendation 2: That consideration is given to developing the role of local intelligence and local assets such as community centres, community newsletters, parish councils and food banks in identifying and supporting older people facing isolation. One option is to expand the reach of the national Older People's Day, which is promoted locally by the Oxford 50+ Network, and seek to involve a wider range of stakeholders in it.

7. The Committee noted that the Council no longer has an officer with dedicated responsibility for older people which is seen as very regrettable. It was acknowledged that there is already a member champion and that the addition of an officer champion might help but there was a view that it would be necessary to give dedicated responsibility to an officer in order to make a real difference. Thought might be given to a joint County/City Council post focused on alleviating loneliness amongst older people. The Acting Communities Manager said that he would reflect the Committee's enthusiasm for dedicated support at the next meeting of the Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Steering Group.

8. It was noted that social prescribing by GPs and other health professionals is potentially a valuable means of supporting older people but progress is not being made as quickly as many would like. This was identified as another area in which the Council could make representations to health partners.

    Recommendation 3: That the Council explores joint working opportunities with the County Council and CCG on preventing elderly isolation and continues to make the case for dedicated resource and the wider use of social prescribing.

9. It was noted that language and cultural barriers often discourage engagement with older members of BAME communities. In addition to the better use of data to identify isolated people from within these groups, the Committee felt that targeted outreach activities might also mitigate this to some extent and provide confidence to these groups. The Acting Communities Manager advised that as result of a recent discussion at Scrutiny about community grants, officers were placing greater emphasis on engaging more effectively with diverse communities.

    Recommendation 4: That the Council should encourage and prioritise targeted outreach work to BAME communities that can help to mitigate language and cultural barriers, including amongst older people who may be at risk of isolation.

10. The Committee noted that Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) has responsibility for protecting the health interests of the wider community and felt that no opportunity should be lost to secure a fair share of that funding for the city, including funding for projects focused on preventing elderly isolation.

    Recommendation 5: That the Council seeks to ensure that 'fair share' of OCCG funding is directed towards projects and services in the city, including where such resources could be focused on preventing elderly isolation.

Conclusion

11. The Committee agreed to revisit this topic at a future date and to invite representatives of the County Council and the CCG to that meeting. It was also agreed that it would be helpful to hear from a representative from Age UK and to know more about their Homeshare Oxford scheme, which facilitates younger people living in older people's spare bedrooms.

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City Executive Board response to the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on preventing elderly isolation

Provided by the Board Member for Culture and Communities

Recommendation	Agree	Comment
1: That consideration is given to how the Council could obtain a clearer view of how to identify and engage with older people who are isolated or at risk of isolation. The former should include the use of population data for different parts of the city to identify any geographical concentrations of older people and gaps in provision.	Yes	All service areas have an ongoing responsibility to make their services accessible to all of the community, including older and isolated people. The Communities Team have good links to the 50+ Network and numerous smaller groups supporting older people across the city and act as link between those and Council Service Areas.

The Council's Data Analyst can be approached to provide an insight in to population data for geographical concentrations of older people so that services can consider how they can adapt or prioritise support to older people in given areas, recognising that the City Council role is primarily one of preventing isolation and that to bring people out of entrenched isolation is a specialist role, resource intensive and not widely achievable within current City Council capacity. |
| 2: That consideration is given to developing the role of local intelligence and local assets such as community centres, community newsletters, parish councils and food banks in identifying and supporting older people facing isolation. One option is to expand the reach of the national Older People's Day, which is promoted locally by the Oxford 50+ Network, and seek to involve a wider range of stakeholders in it. | Partly | As per the Scrutiny Panel's report and the original report to the Scrutiny Panel in December, there is a shared and collective community responsibility reaching across organisations and individuals to support the welfare of older people.

The Older People's Day event organised by the 50+ network is a highly valuable contribution to the inclusion of older people in Oxford and to improving their quality of life. The network has successfully reduced its dependence on the City Council to make this an independent event. Therefore expanding the reach of the event needs to be considered in terms of the capacity of the 50+ network to do so. |
| 3: That the Council explores joint working opportunities with | Yes | Health Partnerships take place in areas across the city and |

the County Council and CCG on preventing elderly isolation and continues to make the case for dedicated resource and the wider use of social prescribing.		are attended by the Council, the CCG and other partners such as Public Health and other local organisations. Isolation, particularly amongst older people, is a recurring theme of these Partnerships Practice Care Navigators are funded by OCCG and delivered by Oxford Federation for General Practice and Primary Care (OxFed). They are link workers supporting frail patients usually who are largely housebound. They will usually visit the patients and define their social needs and then follow up for a limited number of sessions. It has had favourable feedback from both patients and carers. Social prescribing is funded as a key element of NHS England funding for Barton Healthy New Town, the evaluation of this programme will help inform future models of care across the city and beyond.
4: That the Council should encourage and prioritise targeted outreach work to BAME communities that can help to mitigate language and cultural barriers, including amongst older people who may be at risk of isolation.	Yes	All service areas have an ongoing responsibility to make their services accessible to all of the community, including older and isolated people of all ethnicities. Services should continually seek to engage with all communities and seek to mitigate language and cultural barriers. Our Communities Team work with BAME community organisations across the city such as AfiUK and the Asian Cultural Association and will seek to work with them to identify new opportunities to prevent isolation, develop their capacity to support older people in their communities and to develop Council services to be more accessible.
5: That the Council seeks to ensure that 'fair share' of OCCG funding is directed towards projects and services in the city, including where such resources could be focused on preventing elderly isolation.	Yes	We will ask OCCG to explain how funding is directed across the county.