
Health and wellbeing conference

Report being considered by:	Health and Wellbeing Board
On:	23 February 2023
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Report Sponsor:	Councillor Graham Bridgman
Item for:	Discussion



1. Purpose of the Report

This report presents a brief review of the Health and Wellbeing Conference, which took place on 31 January 2023.

2. Recommendation(s)

The Health and Wellbeing Board is invited to reflect on the conference and any lessons that can be learned to inform future events.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 The Health and Wellbeing Conference was held as a hybrid event on 31 January 2023. It had a theme of 'Creating Resilient Communities' and covered the local response to the challenges posed by the rising cost of living.

3.2 The event was held on the same day as the District Parish Conference, since it was felt likely that town / parish councils may be interested in attending both events. This report provides a short summary of the event and highlights feedback received from delegates along with observations from the officers who supported the event.

4. Supporting Information

Background

4.1 The conference was held on 31 January, which was approximately 12 months after the last event.

4.2 Due to the Covid pandemic, the last two events had to be held virtually. While it was felt that there was an appetite to return to an in-person event to facilitate professional networking, the importance of retaining a virtual option was recognised for those who were unable to attend in person. In total, 105 people registered for the event – 70 to attend in-person, with the remainder to attend remotely via Zoom.

4.3 The venue for the event was the Council Chamber in West Berkshire Council's Market Street Offices. This was chosen as it had the necessary audio-visual equipment for broadcasting the event, as well as being an accessible venue in a central location. It also meant that the same room could be used for the District Parish Conference, which was held later that day. This meant that town / parish councillors could attend both events.

4.4 A stalls marketplace was set up in the Council reception, which included representation from local voluntary and community sector organisations and service providers that offer advice and support to local residents. The marketplace was open for half an hour before and after the event. Organisations represented were:

- Age UK
- CCB
- Citizens Advice
- Cost of Living Hub / Ukraine Support
- Solutions4Health – Winter Wellbeing Outreach Service
- Suicide Prevention Action Group
- West Berkshire Food Bank
- Westminster Drug Project

4.5 For the benefit of those attending via Zoom, a video was played prior to the start of the event, which showcased some of the key activities of Health and Wellbeing Board partners over the previous 12 months.

4.6 The theme of the event was ‘Creating Resilient Communities’ and covered the local response to the challenges posed by the rising cost of living. There were presentations on:

- The BOB Integrated Care System and its Strategic Priorities
- Cost of Living Support
- Coping with Financial Pressures
- Food Poverty
- Mental Health
- Grant Funding

Feedback

4.7 The following points are based on feedback from delegates (both informal feedback on the day and via the feedback forms), as well as observations from the officers who supported the event. Unfortunately, only a few delegates completed the feedback forms, which limited the opportunity to learn from the event.

4.8 The topics covered at both Conferences were relevant and demonstrated an understanding of what would be valuable to attendees. Of those who submitted a feedback form, the majority considered the quality of the presentations to be ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ and the usefulness to be ‘very useful’ or ‘useful’. The only negative feedback related to the ‘food poverty’ and ‘mental health’ topics where it was felt that it would have been helpful to have more practical examples of action to

address these issues and less information about the causes, which were well-understood.

- 4.9 A suggestion was made about making the event more accessible for neuro-divergent people and making support available to delegates who may be triggered by issues highlighted at the conference.
- 4.10 Officers felt that the lead-in time was too short, with just three months from instigation to delivery. Dedicated support had been procured in previous years, but was not provided for this event. It was also suggested that consideration be given to greater involvement from HWB partners.
- 4.11 Effective communication / promotion was vital for both events, but particularly for the Health and Wellbeing Conference, which was aimed at members of the public and external organisations, as well as HWB partners. All communications channels were fully and effectively utilised, but the campaign was interrupted by the Christmas / New Year break.
- 4.12 There were some benefits in having both conferences on the same day (e.g. joint planning, avoiding conflicting dates for attendees, enabling attendance at both events, venue set up on one day, etc.). However, it was a long day for attendees and officers alike. Also, the timing of the District Parish Conference was not ideal, since it took place before the Council's budget had been agreed. Only six town / parish council representatives attended both events.
- 4.13 The venue was adequate and was able to accommodate most of the people who wished to attend in person, while being able to stream the event to remote attendees. However, removal of the desk-top microphones / speakers that are used for Council meetings meant that the delegates in the room struggled to hear some of the presentations. Testing and calibration of the ceiling speakers would have helped to mitigate this – this would have required IT support.
- 4.14 The Q&A sessions appeared to work well with the Zoom Q&A feature allowing remote attendees to participate. There was some feedback about the first Q&A session being dominated by West Berkshire Councillors.
- 4.15 Previous Health and Wellbeing Conferences have included workshops to explore key topics in more detail and capture the views of a diverse range of local residents and organisations. Unfortunately, this was not possible at the Council offices due to the lack of additional meeting rooms. There were several comments from delegates suggesting that future events should include workshops for both the in-person and remote delegates. This would allow delegates to interact and reflect on / respond to the presentations.
- 4.16 While the Council Offices worked well, an alternative venue with dedicated conference facilities could be considered more 'neutral' and enable delivery of a more interactive and engaging event. An alternative venue would also have the benefits of other essential support 'on site' including refreshments.
- 4.17 The marketplace was very well received and there was positive feedback from stall holders. However, the marketplace and the noise associated with it did compromise the Council's reception for a short period. There was some feedback from delegates that they would have liked more time for networking and talking to stakeholders.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The option to have just an in-person or an online event would restrict the number of people who could attend and so these options are not recommended.
- 5.2 Holding future Health and Wellbeing Conferences on the same day as the District Parish Conferences is not recommended as this makes for a long day for attendees and support staff.
- 5.3 Holding future events in January is not recommended, since communications are not as effective over the Christmas break. Also, this is a busy period for the NHS.
- 5.4 While the Council Offices could be used to host future events, space and operational constraints mean that it is not an ideal venue, and it places a significant burden on Council staff in terms of organisation, set-up and operation.

6. Proposal(s)

The following proposals have been made in relation to holding future conferences:

- The Health and Wellbeing Conference and District Parish Conference should be held as separate events in future.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board Conference should be held later in the year so comms are not lost in the Christmas / New Year Break.
- An alternative, more 'neutral' venue should be considered for future events, with space for breakout sessions to enable delivery of a more interactive and engaging event and with dedicated staff to help organise and run the event.
- Involve Health and Wellbeing Board partner organisations more in preparations for the event.

7. Conclusion(s)

While many aspects of the conference worked well, there were elements that could be improved and the proposals outlined above would help to address these and create more inclusive and engaging events.

8. Consultation and Engagement

Feedback was received from delegates and officers supporting the event.

9. Appendices

None

Background Papers:

Health and Wellbeing Conference on 31st January 2023 Evaluation Forms.

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will support the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- Help families and young children in early years
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will support the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by ensuring that future conferences are more effective.
