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Notes from the Community Forum 29.1.25

Thank you for attending the Community Forum at Court Bushes Community Hub. It was fantastic to see so many local groups and organisations coming together to talk about their local offer, and to have the chance to network afterwards.

A short summary of the formal part of the meeting follows.

Nicola Brewerton: Community People

<https://communitypeople.org.uk/>

Nicola is the Community Development Manager for Community People, previously MSVA (Mid Sussex Voluntary Action). They are an independent charity, based at the Cherry Tree Centre in Burgess Hill, who support any non-profit organisations in Mid-Sussex and beyond. The organisation is also running the Bentswood Hub 34 in Haywards Heath for the next 18 months.

The re-brand to Community People was to reflect that they support a wider area and do more than volunteer co-ordinating. There are now approximately 600 member groups, membership is free and has many benefits, they offer their time as experts within the charity sector, including set up with groups, help with funding, policy writing, and connection and networking - linking similar groups with shared goals. Members also receive a regular e-bulletin including information about funding, training and events.

Community People run a varied programme of their own events including:

Themed forums. The next events are on 26th February – Mid Sussex Youth Club Forum and the spring Eco Forum on 27th February, including speakers from Sussex Wildlife Trust, and Sussex Nature Recovery Networks.

Volunteering: Volunteer fairs connect volunteers to organisations - of a recent 120 potential volunteers 85% of them found a role. There are over 70 groups at these fairs seeking volunteers. A current focus is on trying to source **younger volunteers**, via working at HH college, using TikTok and similar resources to reach out to younger people. They can provide advice to organisations on safeguarding. The other avenue is **corporate volunteering**, with their “Pledge One” campaign trying to persuade more regular or skills-based volunteering (accountancy etc).

They also sit on WSCC/MSDC/NHS strategy groups, to promote the value of volunteering and how flexible and agile the sector can be. They also expect to be able to provide information on how any potential devolution might impact the sector.

Kirsty Thomas – 4Sight Vision Support UK

<https://www.4sight.org.uk/>

Kirsty had severe and sudden sight loss and, following diagnosis, was introduced to the organisation, who provide advice and support through the sight loss journey. They work with both adults and children (often in an educational setting) and also support parents/carers and family members of those impacted by sight loss.

Kirsty is now CEO of the organisation, for whom she has worked for 16 years, starting as a volunteer co-ordinator and having many other varied roles since.

There are approximately 3,500 people living with sight loss in Sussex, higher than the national average, 21 of them live in our parish, and are supported by Vision Support on a 1-1 basis. There are additional challenges posed by rural living (such as access to transport), meaning support in the home is essential.

Personalised support offered by the organisation includes:

- **Benefits advice** (PIP forms, appeals, tribunals etc). There has been a 200% increase in the previous financial year.
- **Accessible Technology Service** Helping people access the latest technology to remain independent, stay in touch with family and friends, manage finances, work and shopping.
- **Daily Living Aids** for magnification, lighting and other accessibility aids

The biggest challenge for the organisation is funding, there is none provided by the Local Authority and, while the NHS funds salaries for Sight Care Advisors, they do not fund any additional services provided.

Attending these forums helps build relationships with other organisations, so those in need can be signposted to 4Sight for support.

Lesley Cruikshank – Promedica24

<https://promedica24homecare.co.uk/>

Lesley spoke about the partnership working between Promedica24, Sussex Vale Rotary Club, AgeUK & Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Parish Council, who came together with funds to get the dementia cafes up and running not only in Hurstpierpoint but also Hassocks and Haywards Heath. They also run in Sussex Care in St Georges Park, Ditchling Common, meaning there is now a café in the area every week.

Nicola Brewerton asked if there would be the possibility of additional cafes, particularly Burgess Hill. It transpired later in the meeting that this need is likely to be filled by Befriended.

Charlie Carr WSFB

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/west-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service/>

Charlie spoke about their fire prevention service, particularly for vulnerable adults, over 65s and children. They will fit a smoke alarm in any house as well as checking and advising of potential fire hazards. They also conduct “Safe and Well visits” and these can include signposting to other services, not just fire related.

The service can do a “soft visit” directly to a property via referral, or they attend events like ours, speaking about what they do. This service runs throughout West Sussex.

Lee – Community Transport Sussex

<https://www.ctsussex.org.uk/>

Community Transport Sussex services include Dial-A-Ride, Volunteer Car Scheme, Group Hire, Community Hire & SEN School transport and the Electric Vehicle Community Car Club. Their aim is the provision of accessible transport and the reduction of social isolation and loneliness. Previously primarily running for the elderly and disabled, they are also now looking at youngsters with social isolation, particularly since Covid. The organisation has 5 depots now across Sussex, but the service is struggling with funding, due to the increases in running costs including fuel, and now staffing costs. Services run at a loss and, although there is some funding from the Local Authority, they had to increase prices which unfortunately has had the knock-on effect of reducing the number of people using the service.

Mike - Hurst Life

<https://www.hurstlife.co.uk/>

Mike spoke briefly about Hurst Life, they are always interested in local news stories so organisations can reach out to them about specific events etc that might be of interest.

Louise - St Catherines Hospice

<https://www.stch.org.uk/>

Louise spoke briefly about their new hospice opened in Peas Pottage, with an open invitation to visit; the profits from the on-site café go to the hospice.

Hurst Players / Hurst Festival (Bob)

<https://www.hurstplayers.org.uk/>

Both organisations are always looking for new volunteers who might be interested in the varied opportunities available. Funding for the Players comes both from hiring the venue and ticket sales, so they aim to be self-sustaining. Volunteers there range from teenagers to retirees and roles are available front and back of house and the theatre could not run without them.

Naomi @ Building Hope

<https://buildinghope.org.uk/>

Their aim is supporting and encouraging families through all stages of life, through play, talk and support. Naomi brought an example programme for drop in sessions, including the one running out of Court Bushes during the Melting Pot Café hours. As well as the drop ins they run parenting workshops, support groups for mums and dads, and work with schools.

Their website is currently being refreshed so some information is currently out of date and it is best to contact them to check.

Susan – Befriended

<https://befriended.org/>

Their mission is to end loneliness & isolation among older people living in Mid Sussex. The service started as 1-1 in homes, but the range of activities is now much more varied including theatre trips, afternoon teas and choirs with the aim of introducing people to a whole social group rather than just 1 person.

Befriended also provide bereavement support for all ages, including 3 week “Conversations” courses, providing people with a safe space to talk about their bereavement. Many referrals are coming through from social prescribers, and they are working with GP surgeries to make the service more widely available.

Their new project, Café Neuro, is a dementia support café in Burgess Hill, which will be run by 2 retired NHS Dementia nurses who are offering voluntary services, with The Salvation Army donating the use of their building.

David Hastings – Sussex Vale Rotary

<https://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=1567>

David spoke about the Sussex Vale Rotary club and that, although each club is separate, they can also operate together in partnership to connect funding streams, meaning they can be flexible and responsive to local need, such as in the case of the recent revival of the dementia cafés.

Dawn South Downs Legacy

<https://southdownslegacy.co.uk/>

Dawn discussed their will writing & lasting power of attorney services. She is always open to attending groups/events to discuss the importance of being prepared and the services she can offer.

Val – Mid Sussex Older People's Council

<https://msopc.org.uk/>

Founded in 2004, and having recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, MSOPC is a local charity run by older people for the benefit of Mid Sussex older people. The organisation has similar aims to Befriended, reducing loneliness and isolation. Events often include speakers/advice from other organisations such as Henfield HART responders who are attending the Sayers Common afternoon tea on 14th February.

Rev Dr Richard Coldicott Holy Trinity

<https://www.holytrinityhpp.org/>

Rev Richard has been in post for approximately a year now, he stressed that he is the Rector of Hurstpierpoint, not just of Holy Trinity, and his role is to be available to the whole parish.

The most recent news is that in the last two weeks they have been successful in appointing a youth worker. There has been lots of work with the very young children and their families in the parish, but they acknowledge that for the secondary age children, there is still a huge gap. They are hoping that the youth worker can start to address this.

Cllr Majsai brought up the hope that the Parish Council might be able to fund some hours for the youth worker to engage with children outside of the church setting, such as Court Bushes Community Hub, as there is a lack of youth provision since the demise of Sussex Clubs for Young People, Rev Richard was positive that this might be a possibility later in the year, once the new worker has settled in post

Cllr Majsai Thanked everyone for coming and drew attention to our **Annual Parish Meeting 13th May 2025**, which will have a **health and wellbeing** theme. We are looking for two speakers on the subject, plus we will be running “one- minute pitches” again for health and wellbeing organisations to talk briefly about the services they offer locally, how to access them, and how they benefit the health and/or wellbeing of the community.