

Date of Meeting 16 June 2022

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Exemption applied: None

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Community Development: Food Support

Report summary:

An update on the vital work being done by the Community Development Team to address food poverty across the district as requested by members of Housing Review Board.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

The Housing Review Board is invited to note and comment on the ongoing work in support of the councils Poverty Strategy.

Reason for recommendation:

To provide the Board with an update and insight into the work being undertaken as requested by members.

Officer: Victoria Robinson – Community Development Worker, Housing

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Links to background information

.Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

Background of Food Support work

September 2018

Community Development Workers (CDW) started collecting waste food from supermarkets through FareShare Go and delivering to tenants in Axminster. This was publicised through Early Help and to other professionals, it was quickly realised that there was not the capacity to help all the tenants who were being referred in and we needed to move up a level to reach more people.

September 2019

Conversations began with FareShare Southwest about setting up a local food hub so we could support existing food providers and fill in gaps. This would be part of the FareShare Delivered scheme and provide food from warehouses to supplement what was saved from supermarkets at the end of the day. Then a pandemic happened and everything was delayed!

We used this time to map what was already in the district, to find gaps and overlaps, before starting something new.

June 2020

Emergency food supplies, funded by DEFRA, start being bought weekly from Bristol to Honiton for 2 months and being given to East Devon Food Hub members in Axminster, Honiton and Ottery. We engaged Honiton TRIP to make the collections using Coronavirus funding.

September 2020

We supported groups in Ottery and Littleham to open community larders. Ottery opened in October in time for half term, Littleham in November. Ottery supports hundreds of people each week, Littleham around 50.

October 2020

We created a WhatsApp group for the food providers so they were able to communicate with each other. It currently has around 20 members and there are a few others working with us who are communicated with via email or text.

They share gluts of food, equipment and jokes. I can check up on paperwork and regulation changes such as the recent Natasha's Law.

COVID restrictions are reduced so we organise a meeting of the food providers so they can put faces to names and network with each other.

December 2020 – March 2021

Weekly DEFRA emergency food supplies again bought from Bristol because East Devon group seen as an important hub in food supply chain. Food now going to Axminster, Littleham, Honiton, Ottery and Sidmouth. These were a dry run for the Food Hub we had previously been discussing so we could ensure it would work when the time came.

May 2021

Excess food from our Fareshare Go collections (end of the day supermarket food waste) began to be shared with the small local FB group on the Millwey estate. Residents come to collect food from the hall on Wednesday afternoons. There is no eligibility criteria the emphasis is on not letting the food go to waste. Several useful conversations have been had with tenants about poverty and mental health which might not otherwise have happened and tenants have been referred to our Resilience team and other professionals as a result.

August 2021

East Devon Food Partnership deliveries finally started!

Over 500 kilos of waste food bought from FareShare in Bristol to Exeter Food Action and then to St Pauls flat in Honiton where 8 local food providers collected their share and distributed it to their networks. This is a buy in scheme where partners pay £20 for 50kgs of food and can order multiples of the 50kgs. Food providers from Axminster, Broadclyst, Exmouth, Honiton, Ottery and Sidmouth took food initially so nearly all our major towns were involved. This has since expanded to include Cranbrook.

January 2022

Axminster Tesco food offerings began to be collected by a local volunteer to cut down on officer time and the environmental impact of driving half an hour each way.

March 2022

We began mapping the food support in rural parishes with the aim to either link them to the nearest foodbank or support them to set up their own community larder so that everyone in the district who needs support can access it close to home. Several emails were sent beginning this conversation but very few responded so now we are trying to ensure the information held is still up to date.

How does it fit with the EDDC Poverty Reduction Strategy?

1. Maximising incomes

By reducing food costs either by referring to a food bank if in crisis or by signposting people to a food waste group, so money can be spent on other essentials such as rent and bills.

From the strategy itself - "Work in partnership with local voluntary and community groups to address food poverty, including working with Food Banks to develop a food re-distribution hub."

2. Strengthening families and communities

Financial hardship can put a great strain on families and cause breakdowns in relationships or mental health problems. Reducing the worry of providing food and the stigma of using a food bank, access to a community larder can significantly ease that strain.

Supporting groups working to reduce poverty by bringing them together as a hub, letting them share produce, expertise and equipment. Sending them information on funding opportunities. Also supplying them with food at a greatly reduced cost.

Supporting communities – volunteers at food waste groups are often people who use them (for example a woman at Littleham is now on the committee) so they get to know more people, feel valued and mix with different ages, sexes and socioeconomic groups.

People coming to the larders stop to have a chat and can be referred to other agencies who can support them such as our Resilience Team.

3. Promoting an inclusive economy

Volunteers gain qualifications such as Food Hygiene, DBS checks which can help them gain employment. Volunteering is good for their CV.

We have encouraged the creation of a group in Littleham and plan work with the community in St Pauls (our highest areas of deprivation).

4. Improving health

Providing regular nutritional food. People often say food bank food is high carb, low on vitamins and minerals but the fruit and veg and soups that we get through the FareShare deliveries do not fit with that stereotype. For more info on the kind of foods we receive take a look at our East Devon Homes and People social media, I regularly post images there.

Case Studies

- Steve Adcock (Rentals officer) has referred a number of people to the delivery scheme in Axminster, but one tenant Steve was talking with wouldn't accept the food because he felt others needed it more. When I began offering food to people through the Millwey FB group he started coming down to the centre for a chat and would take bits and bobs away with him. After some weeks of talking to him he told me that his benefits were only lasting for 3 weeks of the month so he was coming for food on the 4th week to get him through. I persuaded him to take a box of food each week so he didn't have to scrimp on other things – heating and petrol - for the last week.

2. We are currently working on quite a complex case which has been uncovered through our links with another food provider, though the tenant receives a box of food from us each week. The tenant was too frightened to speak to us because they felt it would make an already very difficult situation worse so was refusing all help.

The case involves the gas to the property being cut off through no fault of the tenant's, debt and mental health issues. None of which we were aware of because the tenant is in a general needs property. This tenants needs would not have come to light without the food partnership links. CDWs are now working with Estate Management Officers, Rentals, Repairs and Benefits to try to improve the tenant's situation.

The mental health of the tenant means that progress is slow and can sometimes take a step backwards but now we are aware we can keep trying to move things forwards.

Financial implications:

There are no specific financial implications on which to comment.

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications on which to comment.