



**TASK AND FINISH GROUP (SOCIAL ISOLATION)
FRIDAY 17TH JANUARY 2020 AT 1PM**

AGENDA

MEMBERS: Councillors-

Mrs S Ager
Miss C Jay
Mrs C Lager
R Ramage
Mrs M Weeks

OFFICERS: Miss N Smith - Assistant Responsible Financial Officer

- 1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**
To appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive any declarations of interest.
- 4. TERMS OF REFERENCE**
To review the mission statement, update and adopt the current Terms of Reference ([attached Page 3](#)).
- 5. CLERK'S REPORT**
To receive and note a report on matters arising ([attached Page 5](#)).
- 6. FIRST STEP CAN BE THE HARDEST**
To receive and note an article published by U3A ([attached Page 6](#)).
- 7. SOCIAL ISOLATION QUESTIONNAIRE**
To discuss the results of a survey on Social Isolation completed by members of the Witham Royal British Legion Women's Section ([attached Page 7](#)).

8. 2020 GROUP FOCUS AND ACTION PLAN

To review and discuss the ideas for consideration into an Action Plan to help combat Social Isolation for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.

9. SOCIAL ISOLATION OUTREACH PROGRAMME

To discuss ideas for a structured Outreach Programme.

10. FUTURE COMMITTEE WORK

To consider any other tasks and areas the committee should focus on going forwards.

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To give an indication of when the committee should reconvene.



WITHAM SOCIAL ISOLATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Task & Finish Group (Social Isolation) or TAFG (Social Isolation), hereafter referred to as “The Group” exists to operate as an advisory working group within the remit of its assigned business and will report to the Community Committee of Witham Town Council.

The Group is an appointed Advisory Committee (also known as working groups, parties or task & finish groups)

The Group will elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from among its members.

An officer of the Council will be present at the meeting to record minutes and action decisions.

All letters and notices will be produced under the authority of Witham Town Council and on Witham Town Council headed notepaper.

INTERESTS

In order to maintain the Town Council’s policy of providing transparency of its dealings, lay Members of the Group will be subject to the same restrictions regarding interests that govern Councillors and Officers. Accordingly lay Members who are not Officers of the Council or Agency will be asked to declare interests on a pecuniary or non-pecuniary basis where appropriate.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Group exists to address the problem of Social Isolation in Witham. The Group will look at the causes of Social Isolation, the different groups which are affected as well as determining ways that the Council can try and minimise Social Isolation within Witham.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The Group will meet as frequently as is required for the efficient transaction and progression of the working group’s goals.

The group will be required to meet at least once every six months. If more than a total period of six consecutive months should pass without a meeting, then the group will be automatically referred to the Community Committee for review or dissolution.

MEMBERSHIP

The Group shall be formed of the following Members of Witham Town Council:

- Councillor Mrs S Ager
- Councillor Miss C Jay
- Councillor Mrs C Lager
- Councillor R Ramage
- Councillor Mrs M Weeks

In addition to this core membership, The Group will reserve the right to appoint additional members from both Witham Town Council and outside bodies.

FINANCING

The Group may make financial recommendations to the Community Committee for consideration, but will have no power to authorise expenditure of any budget lines. Financial recommendations must be ratified by the committee which the group is responsible for reporting to.

RESTRICTIONS

The Group may make recommendations of actions to take to the Community Committee but cannot make decisions by resolution, nor discharge the statutory functions of the Town Council in any format.

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

Issue:

The following agencies operate within Witham trying to reduce Social Isolation

Independent Age

Volunteers commit to phoning or visiting their chosen 'friend' every week or less frequently if required.

Re-engage (formerly Contact the Elderly)

Once a month, normally on a Sunday afternoon each older guest is collected from their home by a volunteer driver and taken to a volunteer host's home where they join a small group for tea, cake and companionship.

Age UK

Offer a free weekly 'friendship phone call' as well as running a helpline for those that need support.

Action for Family Carers

For the elderly, vulnerable adults, those with learning disabilities and family carers- Free and confidential counselling service as well as a befriending scheme.

For young carers- drop in groups.

Home Start

Befriending scheme for socially isolated families.

Age Concern

Befriending service via telephone, face to face or circle of friendship.

Community Agents Essex

Supporting older people and their carers face to face or with a phone call.

Advice:

To receive and note the Town Clerk's Report.

Untreated anxiety or depression prevents some people from looking for services and activities that might help them. U3A can be the cure and GPs might do well to prescribe it, says **Jeremy Bacon** of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy



First step can be the hardest

When Mick Wilson and his wife Jacqui joined the Tai Chi group at Saltash U3A, Cornwall, they went along primarily for the health and wellbeing benefits, but soon found that their friendship circle had doubled, and they were socialising with group members outside the fortnightly classes.

They became aware of the wide range of U3A activities, including walking groups tailored for different abilities, photography, language classes and wine-tasting.

Mick, who had been strumming his guitar as a hobby since the 1960s, saw an opportunity to set up a new U3A group for guitar players which soon attracted interest from people wanting to sing along to the music.

So the Strummers and Warblers group was born, meeting weekly and attracting 10 regulars with varying experience and abilities, but all sharing the enjoyment of learning and playing together.

Mick, semi-retired after a long career as a lecturer and counsellor, recognises the difficulties some older people face in taking steps to becoming involved in community activities for the first time.

“For an already anxious person, the thought of joining a group can fill them with dread,” he says. “But arguably these are the people who need us the most.”

Mick’s therapeutic work with older clients has included people who had come out of long-term caring responsibilities which almost entirely defined their

identity. They had been left bereaved, unsure of their place in the world and experiencing loneliness and isolation. They were at a loss as to how to make any new friends

“Being in a group is a new experience for some older adults,” he says. “Getting involved with a group of strangers can be a daunting experience for some older people.

“There has to be a ‘hook’ to get people involved and often the easiest way for people to try something new is to accompany a friend already engaged in the activity – for people without social connections, this route is missing.

“GPs can play a role in encouraging people to connect with U3A and I would

‘Getting involved with a group of strangers can be a daunting experience for some older people’

hope that increased social prescribing will see more people be supported to overcome anxiety and come along to join us.”

Social prescribing by GPs and other primary care professionals connects people to local, non-clinical services and activities. Accessing support services and social activities has been demonstrated to improve health and wellbeing.

We have never been so connected to friends, family, organisations, services and marketplaces. Technology provides instant access in an “always-on” society.

But there is also growing awareness and concern about loneliness in UK society.

Described by some as an epidemic, loneliness is the mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.

Loneliness is a subjective phenomenon, influenced by complex social and psychological factors – we can be on our own on a desert island for a week without experiencing loneliness, or in a crowded city centre for a day and feel desperately lonely.

There are 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK and by 2025/6 this figure is set to reach 2 million. Of course, loneliness is not an illness, but it can be closely linked to life events that impact on wellbeing and mental health.

Retirement, bereavement, “empty-nest” and onset of chronic illness all contribute, but do not in themselves explain, loneliness in later life.

In its 2018 report *Learning Not Lonely* the U3A acknowledged that it can be difficult for people to come along to an activity for the first time and that a level of confidence is needed to become involved in group activities. Anxiety undoubtedly prevents many people from taking the first step.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is working with its members and partner organisations to increase awareness of the mental health needs of older adults and the role of talking therapies in supporting wellbeing in later life.

■ For further details visit www.bacp.co.uk



ITEM 7

AS A COUNCIL WE ARE TRYING TO LOOK INTO THE GROWING PROBLEM OF SOCIAL ISOLATION AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FEEDBACK THAT YOU COULD GIVE BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

WHICH ACTIVITIES/GROUPS WITHIN THE TOWN DO YOU ATTEND AND HOW OFTEN?

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HOW DO YOU GET TO THESE ACTIVITIES/GROUPS?

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ARE YOU AWARE OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT?

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IS THERE ANYTHING STOPPING YOU FROM ATTENDING ACTIVITIES/GROUPS THAT YOU ARE ALREADY OF AWARE OF?

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ON AVERAGE, WHAT IS THE LONGEST PERIOD OF TIME YOU SPEND WITHOUT SEEING OR SPEAKING TO ANYONE?

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HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY CONTACT WITH AGENCIES SUCH AS AGE CONCERN OR INDEPENDENT AGE?

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PLEASE LEAVE YOUR DETAILS IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO FOLLOW UP ON ANY POINTS THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

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