

West Hill Parish Council (WHPC) - September 6th 2022

Agenda No 22/ 279

Discussion Paper - Warm Rooms

Communities across the country are looking at ways of providing support to residents due to the price increases in fuel and other household costs which are impacting on all, with forecasts that prices will continue to rise exponentially. This cost-of-living crisis is resulting in unprecedented pressure on people – felt first by those on low or fixed incomes, with little or no capacity to handle the marked increase especially in fuel costs, but soon to impact mortgage rates, rental costs and other daily expenses.

Has WHPC a role to play in helping?

It is early days to know the extent of what further the Government, Devon County Council and East Devon District Council and other agencies will do to assist, especially with the onset of winter and priority on ensuring people can keep warm and have sufficient food etc.

Some Councils are setting up or encouraging the setting up of ‘warm rooms/banks’ or as others call them ‘Community sitting rooms’. The idea is to maximise use of public spaces that are already heated or could be heated to serve a larger number of people, allowing the individuals to cut back on fuel costs at home.

A major challenge is how to establish such locations without stigmatising those attending. The provision of activities – board games, free coffees/teas, showing films, putting on talks, etc – makes the provision open to all from young parents, single people of all ages, the unemployed, low income households, through to the older population. Such activities can also help combat isolation within the community.

West Hill does not have any public buildings. What can the WHPC do to assist in supporting innovations within this community?

- Explore with Royal British Legion Club, St Michaels Church and the Village Hall to see what opportunities there are for their facilities to be more fully utilised to benefit the community over the coming winter: in providing a ‘warm sitting room’ and/or provision of hot meals and drinks.
- To discuss with Ottery Help Scheme their plans to see how WHPC can assist.
- Consider awards to local groups (within WHPC award rules) to enable additional activities to open up warm spaces.
- Provide signposting to the various schemes available to assist people with financial challenges.
- Encourage ‘good neighbourliness’ to support those more challenged – an invite to come for - lunch/supper, or a couple hours to chat in front of your fire, or whatever.
- Consider re-opening the WHPC Help Scheme.

Decision

- What steps do Councillors consider the WHPC should/could do.