

## West Hill Parish Council (WHPC) Help Scheme Review September 2020.

*Scheme User said, "The most important aspect was knowing that help was available if we needed it - at the end of the phone. It gave a sense of community and security which in our 70s/80s was most welcome".*

*Volunteer said, "Feeling I was able to do something to help and being part of the community",*

*Another Volunteer said, "I was so impressed with the fantastic organisation of the Scheme which was set up quickly and efficiently".*

These comments encapsulate the responses received from the surveys.

Previous:

- Paper to Councillors, 'WHPC Help Scheme - time for a review'.
- 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 WHPC agreed that surveys would be conducted.
- Paper to Councillors, 'WHPC Help Scheme Review - the surveys -Update 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020'.

### Background

In mid March with the developing Covid-19 Pandemic, WHPC through a letter to every West Hill household advised of the Help Scheme, seeking volunteers to assist and ensuring everyone knew of the contact number in case of need for information or assistance. Until the end of July WHPC provided frequent information newsletters (5) to every household. During the four months there were over 500 requests for help, over 425 prescriptions delivered - all enabled by the help of over 80 volunteers.

### The Surveys

A three prong approach has been taken

- A mailing survey to the majority of households who contacted the Scheme - for response by 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020.
- An email survey of all the volunteers for the Scheme - for response by 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- To request via Messenger for others who wished to comment on the Scheme - due to publication and circulation date, for response by 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020.

## Results<sup>1</sup>

### Scheme Users:

Each household (93)<sup>2</sup> who contacted the Scheme was sent a survey form along with a stamped address envelope for survey return upon completion. There has been a 79% return rate (72), which is excellent. See Appendix A for a breakdown of the responses.

- 74% of respondents used the prescription collection service, which was the most used and significant service provided. Many respondents stated that whilst they used this service initially they then made arrangements for delivery by mail or pharmacy delivery service. 73% of respondents said this was the most useful service provided, bearing in mind that for 57 households this was the only service they used.
- In Appendix A the few responses to what other services could have been provided are listed. Of these, the availability of telephone contact for the isolated could be built on with linkage to the Ottery Help Scheme or by befriending within West Hill, and how WhatsApp is used could be considered.
- 90% of respondents said they used the Scheme between 1 to 10 times.
- 64 households commented on communication with the WHPC, the Newsletter and the Website.

Communication - nearly 94% of these considered it Excellent/ Good.

Newsletter - 92% considered it to be Excellent or Good

Website - 45% considered it to be Excellent or Good;  
- 43% stated they'd Not Used it.

- There was an overwhelming appreciation of the Scheme, the pivotal role of the WHPC Clerk and all the volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> All responses received by 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020

<sup>2</sup> About 11% of West Hill households.

## **Volunteers:**

An email survey was sent to 80 Scheme Volunteers. Further reminders were then sent. Inadvertently two emails to approx. 20 volunteers each their email addresses were exposed. An apology was sent, the recipients asked to delete the other recipients details from their system and they were advised of the WHPC Data Protection Officer (The Clerk). This breach was reported to The Clerk and Chairman. No complaints have been received.

22 responses (27%) to the survey have been received from the Scheme Volunteers. This is lower than hoped, but it seems that some had volunteered but had not needed to be used. However, it is sufficient to provide valid indicative information.

Appendix B sets out the responses received.

It must be remembered that alongside the WHPC Scheme individuals, village organisations and families etc contributed enormously to providing support during Lockdown.

From the responses it is clear that whilst many volunteered to assist they were not required e.g the McColls rota. Knowing they could assist was invaluable. The dissemination of the newsletters was very important to every household, as not all can or do access electronic messaging. The maintaining of up-to-date information in a time of uncertainty and flux was important. 86% of the Volunteer Respondents considered the newsletters to be Excellent or Good. 90% considered communication between themselves and WHPC was Excellent or Good. The Clerk received particular mention and high praise.

From the survey, it is noted that 25% of the Volunteers did not use the WHPC website. However, 54% of Volunteer respondents considered the website Excellent or Good.

Overall, it is clear the Volunteers were positive about their roles and the feelings of assisting, of community and getting to know people they wouldn't normally contact are strong in the replies - See Appendix B section 7.

In Appendix B section 6 are suggestions received with regards to improving the Scheme. There is also a strong sense that people wish to be able to assist in times of need, and so with the development of a WHPC Emergency Plan this needs to be nurtured, developed and utilised.

## **The third prong – other responses**

Through The Messenger other members of the community have been asked to provide their views. The Messenger has only recently been circulated via email and with some 100 hard copies available at McColls. Those wishing to comment have been asked to do so by 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020, so this further information can be made available to the Council at the November meeting.

## **Considerations/Recommendations**

- WHPC has always expressed a wish to acknowledge and celebrate the assistance of the Volunteers, however the various governmental Covid-19 restrictions have meant that this has not been possible. It may be something to consider for the 2021 Parish Meeting? Or other suitable event?
- WHPC should reinforce the need for residents to ensure they have made arrangements for the delivery of their medications to home through the pharmacy or on line mailing services. This was the bulk of the requests for assistance and reduction in this type of help would free up time for other activities that cannot be provided elsewhere.
- The Ottery Help Scheme covers West Hill and it would be worth a) checking to see what services they now provide b) assisting them in promoting their services locally and c) identifying where WHPC can assist. One area of particular note is around the need for and availability of a 'telephone ear' for the lonely and vulnerable, and befriending services.
- The WHPC Help Scheme has provided a real test of mobilising community volunteers at a time of need, and has been a great success. It now needs to be considered how the volunteer base is maintained (bearing in mind Data Protection regulations on holding personal data) and developed and considered in future situations (or reoccurrence of Lockdown).
- Lockdown has meant that more in the community have started to use on-line shopping delivery services, local companies undertaking deliveries and utilising local shops Eg McColls and farm shops etc. Initially those who hadn't previously used the services found it difficult to sign up, or know where to get the services or to get delivery slots. It would not be surprising if such usage drops off as people return to their previous shopping habits, but a further Lockdown should be considered and the need to continue using those home delivery

services. Local firms stepped up to the mark during Lockdown so deserve ongoing support.

- Those who used the WHPC website hold it in high regard. Of note is the number of Scheme users and volunteers who have not used the website. It is natural not to check the site unless prompted there is new information available - so how to provide those prompts? How do all the modern communication means interlink and be used to advantage at times of need - use of WhatsApp etc., but still ensuring those who do not use or have limited access to technology do not miss out. A WHPC Communication strategy is needed?

**Overall, the WHPC Scheme has been a great success, successful in supporting the community, being valued and enhancing its role as a 'community leader'.**

## Appendix A

### SURVEY OF USERS – the results.

93 Households were sent surveys, and 72 returned – 77.4% return rate.  
People could answer as many questions as they wished.

#### 1. What types of Help Scheme assistance did you request?

- Advice 2
  - Shopping 13
  - Collection of prescriptions 68 of whom 57 this was the only help requested.
  - Transport to medical appointments 2
  - Transport elsewhere (please specify) 0
  - signposting to other services 0
  - Other
- 1 x food parcel donation  
1 x to post parcels

#### 2. Between the start of lockdown and the end of July, how many times did you contact the Help Scheme (approximately)?

1 - 10	65
11 -20	5

#### 3. What service did you find most useful?

Prescription collection	53
Shopping	8
Transport to medical appointment	3

#### 4. What service did you find least useful and why?

No replies

#### 5. Were there types of assistance/ services you think the Council could have done/offered?

Telephone conversations for those who felt isolated;  
WhatsApp;  
Support for those without new technology or poor mobile signal;

Petrol for mowers; contact details for plumbers, electricians etc for emergencies;  
Central prescription collection box;  
Whilst roads little used, why weren't the potholes repaired.

**6. How would you rate the following?**

o Communication between the Scheme and you?

<i>Excellent</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>no view</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Fair</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Poor</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Not used</i>	<i>1</i>

o The quality of the Newsletter?

<i>Excellent</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>no view</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Fair</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Poor</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Not used</i>	<i>3</i>

o The content of the WHPC website?

<i>Excellent</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>no view</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Fair</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Poor</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Not used</i>	<i>28</i>

**7. Any other comments?**

The information on local food outlets extremely helpful;  
The concept of the local contact (in own road) helpful;  
Many comments to thank the volunteers, but also for WHPC Clerk, the Royal British Legion Chairman and for McColls.

**Appendix B**

## SURVEY OF VOLUNTEERS – the results.

80 Help Scheme volunteers were sent an email survey, and 22 returned – 27% return rate. People could answer as many questions as they wished.

### 1. What types of Help Scheme assistance did you provide?

- Deliver newsletters 11
  - Shopping 10
  - Collected prescriptions 3
  - Transport to medical appointments 1
  - Transport elsewhere (please specify) 0
  - Undertook repairs 0
  - Other (please specify)
- Help find a gardener
- Phone support to vulnerable/lonely people x 2
- Loan of walking frame and wheelchair
- Central point for area 10+ calls for info on how to access help.

### 2. Between the start of lockdown and the end of July, how many different tasks did you undertake for the Help Scheme? (Put Y next to the nearest)

None	1
1 - 5	7
6 - 10	4
11 - 20	4
21- 30	0
31+	3

### 3. Were there types of assistance you think were needed but not provided?

Support by phone for the vulnerable/lonely people;  
A listening ear. Someone to talk to if people, especially those on their own, were scared or worried; and  
Phone support just to chat/be reassured.

### 4. Did you experience any difficulty in undertaking any tasks?

None reported.

### 5. How would you rate the following?



- Communication between the Scheme and you?

Excellent 18

Good 2

- The quality of the Newsletter?

Excellent 13

Good 6

- The content of the WHPC website?

Excellent 7

Good 6

Not Used 5

**6. Have you any suggestions as to how the Scheme could be improved?**

Count the houses so fewer newsletters printed that are thrown away;  
Newsletter - paper copies only to those families not on social media as a number of houses commented do not need the written letter;  
Perhaps provide the website via Facebook; and  
Just if volunteers could be asked if they would agree to be contacted as a shoulder to cry on.

**7. What was the best part of volunteering?**

Feeling like I was contributing to those in need in such uncertain time and meeting people I wouldn't ordinarily meet;  
Feeling I was helping in a small restricted way;  
Giving back/feeling part of the community/occasional meeting new people;  
Feeling useful;  
Bringing together the community;  
Being able to help others at a difficult time;  
Feeling I was helping my fellow villagers;  
Knowing you were helping someone especially if they were or felt vulnerable;  
Not just volunteering , but celebrating the NHS once a week on the road meant that neighbours, who otherwise never have spoken to each other, have become helpful friends;  
Trying to help those less fortunate; and  
Meeting new neighbours;

**8. Any other comments?**

Good to keep things going - we have sufficient people willing to help to make sure our older residents feel they can ask for help shopping etc;  
Keep volunteers as a bank of available helpers should need arise; and  
So impressed with the fantastic organisation of the Scheme which was et up so quickly and efficiently.