| By: | Mr Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health |
| | Benjamin Watts - Monitoring Officer |
| To: | County Council meeting – 21 March 2019 |
| Subject: | Select Committee: Loneliness and Social Isolation |

Summary:    To comment on and endorse the report of the Select Committee on Loneliness and Social Isolation.

Recommendations:

(a)    The Select Committee be thanked for its work and for producing a relevant and balanced document.

(b)    The witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the Select Committee be thanked.

(c)    County Council's comments on the report be noted and the report endorsed.

## 1.    Introduction

A Select Committee on Loneliness and Social Isolation was established by the Scrutiny Committee, based on a proposal by Mr Pugh, and started its work in July 2018.

## 2.    Background

There is growing recognition that loneliness and social isolation are serious issues with far reaching consequences for individuals and wider society.

While loneliness can affect anybody, its mental and physical effects can be particularly detrimental for older people, because the health risks associated with it increase as people age. It has been estimated that about 10% of those aged 65 and over, that is about 30,000 people in Kent alone, suffer from acute loneliness.

Loneliness and social isolation are a matter of concern to local authorities, because these conditions can increase pressure on a wide range of health and public services. Research indicates that they can increase the risk of premature death by 30%, and that weak social connections carry health risks that are comparable to obesity and smoking. With an ageing population, and a difficult

financial climate, loneliness and social isolation are likely to become even more challenging issues.

Kent County Council can and should play a key role by taking up the challenge and ensuring that adequate services and support are in place to alleviate suffering and improve the lives of its older residents.

## 3. Select Committee

*2.1 Membership*

The Chairman of the Select Committee was Mr Ken Pugh (Conservative). Other members of the Committee were Mr Matthew Balfour (Conservative), Mrs Pauline Beresford (Conservative), Mr David Brazier (Conservative), Ms Karen Constantine (Labour), Ms Sarah Hamilton (Conservative), Mr Tony Hills (Conservative), Mrs Liz Hurst (Conservative) and Ms Ida Linfield (Liberal Democrat).

*2.2 Terms of Reference*

The agreed terms of reference were:

1. To put into context social isolation and loneliness, and to identify the groups of people who are particularly affected by social isolation and/or loneliness in Kent.

2. To investigate the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

3. To investigate the extent to which KCC's current service provision and partnership working is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Kent.

4. To recommend initiatives and strategies to prevent or reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

*2.3 Evidence*

The Loneliness and Social Isolation Select Committee held 19 formal hearing sessions with a wide range of witnesses, including: representatives of the Campaign to End Loneliness, the British Red Cross, Public Health England, Essex County Council, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, local organisations and KCC Cabinet Members and senior officers.

Full details of all the oral evidence received by the Committee are available online:

https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=910&Year=0

The Committee also made four visits. These were to the Kent Shed near Folkestone, the Healthy Living Centre in Dartford, Involve Kent in Maidstone, and the Wellfield Community Hall in Hartley for a discussion with a group of Community Wardens and volunteers.

Finally, the Committee received written evidence from a number of sources, including the Dioceses of Rochester and Canterbury, Kent Police, local Clinical Commissioning Groups, the Physical Disability Forum and many local voluntary organisations. The full list of the witnesses who provided oral and written evidence can be found in Appendix 2.

## 4.    The Report

The Select Committee approved its report at a formal meeting on 18 February 2019.

The executive summary of the report is attached in Appendix 1. A copy of the full report is available online:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/92793/Loneliness-and-social-isolation-select-committee-report-March-2019.pdf

## 5.    Monitoring of Recommendations

In accordance with the process for monitoring Select Committee recommendations, as set out in the Constitution (Appendix 4 Part 4 – 4.26), a cross Portfolio/Directorate action plan for the recommendations will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in July 2019 for consideration. Any formal decision(s) needed in order to implement the Select Committee recommendations must comply with all of the necessary requirements for making executive decisions. These include compliance with all legal obligations, the Public Sector Equality duty and consultation where necessary.

## 6.    Conclusion

I welcome the report and would like to congratulate the Select Committee on completing this piece of work.

I would also like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee and the officers who supported it.

**7.    Recommendations**

5.1    The Select Committee be thanked for its work and for producing a relevant and balanced document.

5.2    The witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the Select Committee be thanked.

5.3    County Council's comments on the report be noted and the report endorsed.

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Committee Membership

1.1.1.    The Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council (KCC): seven members of the Conservative Party, one member of the Labour Party and one member of the Liberal Democrat Party.

Mr Matthew Balfour

Conservative

Malling Rural

Mrs Pauline Beresford

Conservative

Dover Town

Mr David Brazier

Conservative

Sevenoaks Rural North East

Ms Karen Constantine

Labour

Ramsgate

Ms Sarah Hamilton

Conservative

Tunbridge Wells Rural

Mr Tony Hills

Conservative

Romney Marsh

Mrs Liz Hurst

Conservative

Birchington & Rural

Ms Ida Linfield

Liberal Democrat

Canterbury City South

Mr Ken Pugh

Conservative

(Chairman)

Sheppey

## 1.2. Scene setting

1.2.1.    There is growing recognition that loneliness and social isolation are serious issues with far reaching consequences for individuals and wider society.

1.2.2.    While loneliness can affect anybody, its mental and physical effects can be particularly detrimental to older people, because the health risks associated with it increase as people age. It has been estimated that about 10% of those aged 65 and over, that is about 30,000 people in Kent alone, suffer from acute loneliness.

1.2.3.    Loneliness and social isolation are a matter of concern to local authorities, because these conditions can increase pressure on a wide range of health and public services. Research indicates that they can increase the risk of premature death by 30%, and that weak social connections carry health risks that are comparable to obesity and smoking. With an ageing population, and a difficult financial climate, loneliness is likely to become an even more challenging issue.

1.2.4.    Tackling this highly personal and complex problem is not easy. Yet Kent County Council can and should play a central role by taking up the challenge and ensuring that adequate services and support are in place to alleviate suffering and improve the lives of its older residents.

## 1.3. Terms of reference

1.3.1.    To put into context social isolation and loneliness, and to identify the groups of people who are particularly affected by social isolation and/or loneliness in Kent.

1.3.2.    To investigate the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

1.3.3.    To investigate the extent to which KCC's current service provision and partnership working is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Kent.

1.3.4.    To recommend initiatives and strategies to prevent or reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.

## 1.4. Scope

1.4.1.　The complexity of this topic and the tight timetable for the review required a clear and focused approach. Key themes and aspects covered by the review are detailed below:

1. **To put into context social isolation and loneliness, and to identify the groups of people who are particularly affected by social isolation and/or loneliness in Kent.**

   a. To define and put into context social isolation and loneliness.
   b. To identify the key groups of people who are affected by social isolation and/or loneliness in Kent.

2. **To investigate the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.**

   a. To explore the main causes leading to social isolation and loneliness amongst adults aged 65 and over in Kent.
   b. To assess the impact of social isolation and loneliness on this group of residents.

3. **To investigate the extent to which KCC's current service provision and partnership working is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Kent.**

   a. To explore KCC's current service provision and partnership working aimed at reducing social isolation and loneliness amongst adults aged 65 and over in Kent.
   b. To examine the extent to which this service provision and collaboration is effective in dealing with social isolation and loneliness amongst this group of people.

4. **To recommend initiatives and strategies to prevent or reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness on Kent's older residents.**

# Key messages

- **Loneliness and social isolation are serious problems with far reaching implications, not just for individuals, but also for wider society.**

- **They can affect anybody, but their effects are likely to hit the hardest in later life.**

- **They can lead to mental and physical health issues, with impacts comparable to smoking and obesity.**

- **Action to combat loneliness is most effective if it is delivered in partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors.**

- **Interventions need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals, because there is no one-size-fits-all solution.**

- **It is crucial to raise awareness of the services and support that are available, and to promote a cultural change around the stigma that is attached to this debilitating condition.**

- **The most effective way for different parts of KCC to tackle loneliness and social isolation is through a single, overarching strategy which explicitly recognises its seriousness, promotes collaboration and sets out clear steps to deal with them.**

- **We all have a role to play, and only by working together can we make a real difference to the lives of lonely and socially isolated people.**

## 1.5. Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recognises that loneliness and social isolation are not issues that affect older people exclusively. The Committee recommends that the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate leads further investigations into the prevention or reduction of loneliness and social isolation amongst specific groups of people who are also likely to be impacted, such as young people, disabled people and carers.

### Recommendation 2

KCC should produce a corporate strategy aimed at tackling loneliness and social isolation in Kent. The strategy should set out clear objectives, as well as roles and responsibilities, and should strengthen coordination and collaboration between KCC services.

### Recommendation 3

KCC should organise a high-profile event to launch its strategy. This should involve partner organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors. A key objective of this event should be to promote closer collaboration in order to prevent or reduce loneliness and social isolation in Kent.

### Recommendation 4

KCC should work with the Government, local partner agencies and the voluntary sector to enable Kent residents to access, from both a single online source and a single contact number, information on services, activities and support that could help to reduce their risk of feeling lonely.

KCC should also consider the opportunity of volunteering in the Government's pilots to explore how better use of data can help to make it easier for people to find local activities, services and support.

### Recommendation 5

The Committee fully endorses the social prescribing model, which enables organisations to refer people – including those who suffer from loneliness - to a range of services that offer support for social, emotional or practical needs.

The Committee also endorses the pilot to assess the effectiveness of Kent Community Wardens acting as "community connectors" and playing a central role in the identification, referral and support of people who suffer from loneliness and social isolation. The Committee recommends that, if necessary, funding should be found to ensure that this project is completed. if the pilot is successful, an understanding will be needed of how the role of Community Wardens would fit alongside social prescribing structures in the county.

### Recommendation 6

**KCC's Public Transport team should investigate the feasibility of expanding the Kent Karrier service, and should continue to offer financial support and information to those who wish to introduce or expand a community transport service.**

### Recommendation 7

**KCC's Public Transport team should encourage organisations in Kent's transport sector to develop ways of connecting people – such as the Talking Bus service - so that transport networks play the greatest possible role in tackling loneliness and social isolation.**

### Recommendation 8

**KCC should work with the Government to develop a Kent-focused campaign to raise awareness of the issues of loneliness and social wellbeing. The campaign should provide information including:**

- **the negative consequences of loneliness and social isolation**
- **the support that is available and how to access it.**

### Recommendation 9

**KCC should sign up to the Government's pledge to support its employees by addressing loneliness and building social connections. KCC should also encourage local employers across all sectors to adopt the pledge to support their own employees' social wellbeing and health.**

### Recommendation 10

**KCC should adopt the Government's standard approach to measuring loneliness, which is based on the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and should encourage partner organisations and service providers in Kent to do the same in order to ensure consistency across the county.**

### Recommendation 11

**KCC should set up a panel – which should include KCC Members – to monitor the effectiveness of interventions, promote best practice, and review progress against the objectives of the Loneliness and Social Isolation Strategy.**

# Evidence

## Oral evidence

The list includes a summary of the key topics discussed in each session.

**Monday 10th September 2018**

- **Samantha Sheppard, Senior Commissioner, Kent County Council**

  o Background and definitions of loneliness and social isolation
  o Use of technology to reduce the effects of loneliness and social isolation
  o Mapping of services and social prescribing

- **Gerrard Abi-Aad, Head of Intelligence, Rachel Kennard, Senior Intelligence Analyst, and Amber Povey, Kent Graduate Programme, Public Health, Kent County Council**

  o The extent and incidence of social isolation in Kent
  o Characteristics associated with isolation

**Wednesday 12th September 2018**

- **Penny Southern, Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health, Kent County Council**

  o The policy context in KCC
  o Characteristics associated with loneliness and social isolation
  o Interventions
  o Workforce and reach

- **Mr Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, Kent County Council**

  o The role of Kent Community Services in relation to tackling loneliness and social isolation
  o Community Wardens

- **Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste, Kent County Council**

  o Role of transport in reducing loneliness and social isolation
  o Community transport services
  o Rural communities

**Monday 17th September 2018**

- **Mr Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Ms Diane Marsh and Mrs Clair Bell, Deputy Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Kent County Council**

  o KCC's role in supporting an ageing population
  o Barriers

- **Katie Stewart, Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement, and Stephanie Holt-Castle, Head of Countryside, Leisure and Sport, Kent County Council**

  o Causes of loneliness and social isolation
  o The GET Directorate's role in helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation
  o Data evaluation
  o Community Wardens

- **Multi-Disciplinary Group – including representatives from Adult Social Care in Kent County Council, Red Zebra, Kent Community Healthcare Foundation Trust, and Kent and Medway STP**

  o Promoting independence
  o Social prescribing and referrals
  o Interventions
  o Working across sectors


**Wednesday 19th September 2018**

- **Dr Kellie Payne, Research and Policy Manager, Campaign to End Loneliness**

  o Background and role of Campaign to End Loneliness
  o The impact and causes of loneliness
  o Successful interventions
  o Challenges

- **Olivia Field, Policy and Engagement Manager - Loneliness and Social Isolation, and Kat Radlett, Policy & Advocacy Officer, British Red Cross**

  o The role of the British Red Cross and their involvement with the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness
  o National policies and action
  o Community Connectors

**Monday 24th September 2018**

- **Diane Aslett, Development Officer, Age UKs in Kent Consortium**

    o Age UK's role in relation to reducing loneliness and social isolation
    o Social prescribing and referrals

- **James Kirby, Programme Manager, Social Enterprise Kent - Ageless Thanet**

    o The role of Ageless Thanet along with activities and services offered
    o Measurement and evaluation
    o Involving local businesses

- **Ken Scott, The Older People's Task and Finish Group and Paul Clarke, Maidstone Borough Council**

    o The role of the Older People's Task and Finish Group in Maidstone
    o Types of prevention
    o Social prescribing


**Wednesday 26th September 2018**

- **Andy Staniford, Senior Policy Advisor, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport**

    o National Strategy on Loneliness and role of Tackling Loneliness Team at the DCMS
    o Evaluating and use of surveys
    o Corporate responsibility
    o Reasons behind loneliness and pathways to prevention

- **Nicky Saynor, Health & Wellbeing Programme Manager and Terry Blair-Stevens, Public Health Consultant in Health & Wellbeing, Public Health England**

    o The role of Public Health England in relation to loneliness and social isolation
    o Research and evidence available
    o Opportunities

- **Ian Thomson, Assistant Director for Community Safety and Richard Stanford-Beale, Research & Development Manager - Community Safety, Kent Fire and Rescue Service**

    o The role of KFRS in relation to loneliness and social isolation
    o Impact of loneliness and social isolation
    o Collaborative working
    o Initiatives

**Monday 1st October 2018**

- **Dr Hannah Swift, Eastern ARC Lead and research Fellow, University of Kent**

  o Characteristics of those suffering from loneliness
  o Technology
  o Prevention

- **Hayley Brooks Head of Housing and Health, Sevenoaks District Council, and Debra Exall, Strategic Relationships Adviser, Kent County Council**

  o Role of District Councils in tackling loneliness and social isolation
  o One You
  o Referrals

- **Rebecca Jarvis, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, and Kirsty O'Callaghan, Head of Strengthening Communities, Essex County Council**

  o The work of Essex CC around reducing loneliness and social isolation
  o Joint working
  o Raising awareness including use of social media
  o Social prescribing

## Written evidence

- Action with Communities in Rural Kent

- British Red Cross

- Cobtree Shed

- Diocese of Canterbury

- Diocese of Rochester

- Friendly Faces of Kent

- Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate, KCC

- Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Partnership

- Kent Community Warden Service, KCC

- Kent Police

- Kent resident, anonymised response

- NHS Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley, and NHS Swale CCGs

- North West Kent Volunteer Centre

- Public Transport Team, KCC

- Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

- Swale Community and Voluntary Services

- Thanet Community Support Partnership

- The Physical Disability Forum

- Volunteer Centre Shepway – Folkestone Farm Barn

- Whitstable Shed

## Visits

**Friday 14th September 2018**

- Healthy Living Centre, Dartford

**Friday 21st September 2018**

- Folkestone Farm Barn

- Shepway Volunteer Centre

**Thursday 27th September 2018**

- Community Wardens, Hartley Carers' Café at Wellfield Community Hall

**Tuesday 2nd October 2018**

- The Involve Hub, Maidstone