

<p>Scrutiny Working Group Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage</p>	<p>Lead Convenor: Cllr Inchley Members: Cllrs Ham, Phripp, Dunk, Boyden, Hayden, Clarke,</p>
<p>Date Meetings held on: 22nd July 2021 25th August 2021</p>	<p>Two meetings have been held since the last Scrutiny Meeting Report and the following are high level records of areas covered.</p>
<p>Meeting 22nd July 2021 This meeting focused on engaging communities and supporting them. The group was joined by Cllr Jon Cousins and Kate Hellard of Frome Town Council to talk about their knowledge around engaging and supporting communities. Speakers took the working group through their experiences and offered advice on ways forward.</p> <p>A clear message from both speakers was that to make changes to improve community outcomes/outputs whatever they be then MDC (MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL) needs to empower those communities. This involves ‘Citizen Power.’</p> <p>Citizen Power can be enabled by people getting together and by building relationships and listening to people collecting information and then facilitating them to do something. This all takes time, but Mendip could help by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting streets in the larger towns to come together like villages do – what can they learn from village communities, help to address issue of commuting voids. 2. Making it easier to use open spaces for informal gatherings in parks etc. One speaker noted the work the Council has recently done to make Street Parties easier, pointing to the benefit of this and how it could be extended for other areas. 3. Some of the Stronger Somerset aspirations about working to create connected communities can still be used to pull communities together. 4. Support for Cllrs on how to listen to communities would help them get the best from their endeavours. Could also use parish councils to reach out to communities to do some door knocking. These elements are important to find the doers and support them. 5. The funding of community development works and grants to parishes are ways of building capacity in the community. 	

Some links that Members may be interesting in are as follows:

1. Cllrs. could do some basic training in listening/organising? <https://www.corganisers.org.uk/training/our-courses/intro-community-organising/>
2. Here are some stories about how my approach has been employed to facilitate community action. <https://www.corganisers.org.uk/what-is-community-organising/stories/>
3. Cormac Russell Ted Talks – YouTube

Meeting 25th August 2021

The group were joined by Julia Ridge, the programme manager for the West Somerset Opportunity Area Programme, and Steve Shrimplin.

The West Somerset Opportunity Area was launched by the government to raise education standards locally, aimed at providing every child and young person with the chance to reach their full potential. The programme is focused on improving early years education, improving outcomes at primary and secondary school, and helping young people find a decent job. West Somerset is one of 12 areas in England chosen as an Opportunity Area

There are considerable similarities between the difficulties faced by families in West Somerset and in Mendip, due to the rurality of the two areas.

Key areas coming out of the work with communities were identified as:

- Poor communication skills in early years having long term impacts on children's development and opportunities.
- The impact of poor public transport on the ability of your people to access jobs.
- The cost of public transport where families have limited income.
- The inability to access training due to the long distances people must travel.
- The impact of legal obligation on councils to provide post 16 education not being accompanied by legislation obliging the funding of post 16 educational travel costs.
- The importance of community hubs and other places where families can access support, and of members of the community being able to connect those in need with those who can help.

Steve Shrimplin then gave the group a short update on work regarding the recovering of council tax debts. The working group was advised on support for those residents struggling to pay their council tax. The Council will be promoting the need for people struggling to contact the council to avoid them being summonsed and so that the Council can see if there is any support that might be available to them.

Agreed Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next steps for the group are to pull together all the information gained through the various meetings and identify the key themes and possible actions to be recommended to Cabinet.•	
Next meeting date/ location TBA	Person booking Tracy Aarons