Community and Wellbeing committee meeting 27 October 2026

Agenda item 10 – Voluntary Community Groups Support

Written by Community Engagement & Projects Officer

Supporting Voluntary Community Groups

On 24 and 30 September 2026, representatives from local voluntary organisations and community groups were invited to meet with councillors and officers to discuss the types of support they might need.

Various suggestions were brought forward and discussed. The following summarises the more popular ideas and responses and outlines possible next steps and points for discussion in moving some of these ideas forward.

Volunteer bulletin

A quarterly email newsletter to promote volunteering opportunities in the town, highlighting groups' activities, achievements and fundraising events.

At time of writing the mailing list already has 108 people subscribed.

Reponses to the idea:

- Supportive but some concern that it could get a bit long and wouldn't provide for immediate needs, events planned at short notice etc
- Overall view was that the bulletin would be useful but alongside other promotion.
- Strength of hard copy newsletter noted – Museum had got lots more volunteers after being profiled in quarterly newsletter.
- Suggestion that hard copy newsletter could point people to where information about voluntary groups is promoted.
- Important that key dates are provided to groups so that they know when it will be issued (so that info is in date) and when the deadline for contributions is.
- Bulletin sign-up promotion: in the library and in info for people new to the town as they are potential volunteers – also via voluntary groups' and church mailing lists etc.

Next steps:
Agree launch date and work with volunteer groups to establish content for first edition.

If information is required from groups, a clear deadline needs to be set.

Agree means of promoting the bulletin.

Online directory

Build on the directory already on the town council website. Populate with local voluntary groups.

Responses to the idea:

- Difficulties with this accepted, but something straightforward that lists the groups, with a line each of description and points people on to the organisations' own websites/social media would be welcome.
- Suggestion of an online platform that groups could populate themselves with alerts for subscribers when new info added. Council made point that rules around local government websites would make this difficult. Facebook an alternative to this idea – see below.
- Case Studies - point was made that people will be attracted to a voluntary group more if it's not simply dry information but something more anecdotal about how someone has benefited from being involved. (Nb. We did this with the Nature Volunteers piece in last newsletter). Can there be case studies included in the directory listings?
- This idea was also suggested in the health & wellbeing Residents' Panel.

Next steps:
Establish eligibility criteria for inclusion plus T&Cs.

Agree what can be included in each entry, finalise entry form and determine process for keeping the entries up to date.

Volunteers' Forum

Town council-facilitated forums – could include speakers invited to address points of interest and concern and offer support and advice to local groups. Could be networking event or training.

Response to the idea:

- Some interest in this idea, possibly to offer training or information.
- One person said that people join volunteer groups for the specific activity it offers and that general socials tend to work less well

- Comments on the value of BoA Join In day for networking.

For consideration:
Establish that there is enough interest.

How these would take shape – how often would they take place; how would we identify the most useful themes.

Town Council hosted social event

An event to recognise and celebrate the contribution and achievements of local volunteers.

Response to the idea:

- Interest in this and possibly something more frequently than annual.
- A coffee morning or something like a business breakfast as a means for voluntary group reps to network. Everyone agreed that the social side of volunteering is crucial, bringing benefits to the individuals involved and supporting the retention of volunteers.

For consideration:
How would this take shape – when and where.

Budget.

Re the idea of a more informal/frequent coffee morning or similar as a means for voluntary group reps to network – this might work better as self-led amongst volunteers.

Facebook group

Create a Facebook group where people can find volunteering opportunities/voluntary groups can put out calls for help. This would support the quarterly bulletin and give groups a platform for short-notice and new opportunities that arise between bulletins.

Response to idea.

- Strong support for this proposal.
- Would need to establish clear group rules around membership and posting.

For consideration:
The admin potentially required might be too much for the council to run it.

Could this be set up and run by volunteers?

Sharing resources & ideas

It was recognised that groups have different resources and a system for sharing/borrowing amongst groups could be useful.

Response to idea:

- Would be helpful for groups to know who has what and be able to contact each other to swap/borrow equipment
- Bath/Frome borrowing library – could we have something similar?
- Potential to create and distribute a list of amongst groups of what each group has that they are willing to lend.
- Could Town Council create a spreadsheet of contact details for those attending these meetings?

For consideration:
Town council to create and maintain a spreadsheet to be shared to groups, detailing what equipment each group has that they are willing to lend. This information can be gathered alongside the directory.

Once the spreadsheet is set up, groups would be responsible for organising sharing between themselves.

Other thoughts and ideas

- Potential for U3A with its circulation list of c600 to promote volunteer bulletin to its members.
- Many companies enable/encourage their staff to volunteer – can they be contacted and directed to town-based volunteering activities
- Produce a leaflet/flyer signposting people to where they can find out about volunteer groups. These could go in bookswaps as well as usual town centre places and estate agents.

- How can we get younger people involved in volunteering?

For discussion…
Younger volunteers – how to incentivise. Could young people who volunteer get a free credit for something in the town? Could there be an award scheme for young volunteers?