

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024
title: LUNCH CLUBS- UPDATE
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PLANNING
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report provides an update on lunch clubs.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Residents, their health and wellbeing creating flourishing, healthy and happy communities.
- Continue to be a well-managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs. Ensure that our services are accessible to all and that we deliver services to meet customer needs.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Lunch clubs are typically run by the voluntary, charity and faith sector and rely on volunteers to serve, and in some cases cook, the meals. Some are catered and some provide entertainment along with the community connection and hot meal. Lunch clubs vary in size and frequency, some provide a lunch weekly, some monthly and some hold one a quarter.

2.2 As previously reported to this committee, Lunch clubs in the Ribble Valley have been supported financially by RVBC following the removal of funding from LCC for Meals on Wheels since 2015. A budget is set to support Lunch Clubs across Ribble Valley.

2.3 Lunch clubs can apply for up to £800 for the main lunch club by completing an application and returning it to the Partnership Officer for consideration. The grant allocation of up to £800p/a is allocated based on the number of people attending and the cost to the resident.

2.4 Since September 2019, in addition to the grant described above, the Council has supported the provision of a 'Christmas Lunch' by Lunch Clubs during the Christmas period. This is in the form of a £250 payment.

2.5 In the immediate post Covid period, the number and frequency of lunch clubs dramatically reduced to just 12 in 2022 from 20 Lunch Clubs pre covid. The recent cost of living crises has dramatically increased the cost of heating venues, and providing food, which has further affected the continued viability of 'Lunch Clubs'.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Due to the challenges faced by the voluntary sector, the Lunch Club grant has evolved to encourage a wider range of organisations to operate as lunch clubs, warm spaces

and offer Christmas lunches through partnership working. Organisations have been encouraged to work together to share spaces and volunteers, the Community Voluntary Service (CVS) has supported those who need more volunteers by advertising the opportunity, village halls and the faith sector have worked together, and existing coffee mornings and warm spaces have developed their offer to include sandwiches, soups and cakes, or similar, which has allowed them to access the grant.

3.2 There are now 25 lunch clubs/ warm spaces listed with RVBC in the Ribble Valley. Most of these appear on our community directory ([Community Groups Directory search – Ribble Valley Borough Council](#)). Not all lunch clubs wish to be on the directory, nor do all of them choose to access the grant. 12 lunch clubs accessed the main grant in 2023, and 21 clubs received financial support of £250 towards Christmas lunch. This is estimated to have benefited over 900 residents in 2023-2024. Appendix A details the clubs that have benefited from the main grant and appendix B the Christmas grant, in 2023-2024.

3.3 The Christmas grant remains popular with ten applicants so far this year. Other clubs still have time to apply for 2024-25.

3.4 Current budget to date shows an underspend of £2508.

4 FUTURE POSITION

4.1 Lunch clubs are likely to remain popular and continue to develop and diversify to meet the needs of the local community. Local services have worked together to improve accessibility to lunch clubs /warm spaces. For example, there is now a new bus service covering the Hodder Valley. The Little Green Bus continues to develop their offer and expand their volunteers to cover more rural areas. More services are undertaking rural outreach projects making full use of lunch clubs to connect with vulnerable and isolated residents. This area of work aligns with 'social prescribing' tackling issues of loneliness, affordable warmth, social isolation in the community.

4.2 It is recommended that RVBC continue to support lunch club activity with the provision of the lunch club and Christmas grant on an annual basis going forward. The current budget allocation is ample to cover the needs of the activities, and the financial support is highly appreciated by organisations and welcomed by residents.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The existing Lunch Club budget is sufficient to cover the additional cost of support of Christmas Lunches which encourages new lunch clubs to emerge.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The existing grant criteria allows the provision of Christmas Lunches and wider social activities.
- Political – No implications identified.
- Reputation – The Council is known for supporting Lunch Clubs and activities that reduce social isolation in the older population; the Christmas Grant celebrates this and is very well received.
- Equality & Diversity – Lunch Clubs are inclusive spaces for those with disabilities and offer access to a range of services that offer support. Grants are offered to all faith groups, voluntary and charity organisations.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Continue to provide financial support for an annual Christmas lunch grant.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS
None

For further information please ask for Sarah Wells, extension 4506