

## Report to Community Committee 15 August 2017

### Over 70s Christmas Gift Voucher Scheme 2017

#### Demand for the scheme

In 2016 we issued 1,008 vouchers, and 918 (91%) were redeemed.

The 2015 mid-year population estimates for Frodsham from Cheshire West & Chester Council (the latest available) estimate a population of 1,770 aged 70 and above. This number is likely to have increased in the last two years due to our aging population.

The budget for the scheme in 2017 is £12,000. The rules of the scheme in previous years include a provision to reduce the face value of the vouchers or issue the vouchers on a first-come, first-served basis if the scheme was over-subscribed.

It is recommended that the face value of the voucher remains at £10, the same as in 2016.

As vouchers need to be printed in advance, it is recommended that the rules for 2017 adopt a "first-come, first served" principle.

#### Timetable

The proposed timetable for the 2017 scheme is:

Advertise voucher scheme in Frodsham Life	Thursday 31 August 2017
Closing date for businesses and organisations <i>(so they can display posters encouraging residents to apply)</i>	Friday 6 October 2017
Closing date for resident applications	Friday 3 November 2017
Vouchers available for councillors to distribute	Tuesday 14 November 2017
Deadline for distributing vouchers	Saturday 25 November 2017 <i>(Day of Frodsham Christmas Festival)</i>
Deadline for residents to redeem vouchers	Wednesday 31 January 2018
Deadline for businesses and organisations to redeem vouchers	Wednesday 28 February 2018
Deadline for FTC to reimburse businesses and organisations	Friday 30 March 2018

There will inevitably be some late applications. It is recommended that the absolute cut-off date for businesses and application is 3 November and for residents (subject to the numbers received by the published cut-off date not exceeding the budget), 24 November, although the earlier dates should appear in the publicity to facilitate the administration of the scheme.

#### Publicity

Frodsham Life has agreed to free editorial coverage of the scheme, and to print the residents' half-page application form for £300+VAT (the same as last year), in the September 2017 edition (publication date 31 August).

The magazine has also agreed to publish a list of participating retailers and other organisations accepting the voucher in its November edition (free of charge).

We will ask all retailers participating in the scheme to display posters to raise residents' awareness of the scheme and to publicise the cut-off date for applications.

We will make full use of the website and social media to promote the scheme.

### **Administration**

To reduce the amount of administrative time required to process resident applications and produce the vouchers, the voucher has been redesigned to include a perforated removable section that will be labelled with the recipient's name and address.

This will:

- allow the office to print labels rather than handwriting each voucher
- assist Councillors delivering the vouchers
- allow residents to remove personal information before handing over the vouchers.

The vouchers will be numbered sequentially by the printer, and the voucher number will be recorded in the Council's records against the details of the resident it was issued to.

The cut-off date for redemption will be clearly shown on the face of the voucher to avoid misunderstandings.

The year will be included prominently in the voucher design and the Council's embossed seal will be applied by hand to each issued voucher to guarantee validity.

The cost of printing the vouchers (using our usual printer, Digital Impressions) will be £175. The cost in 2016 was £125 but did not involve numbering or perforating the vouchers.

To encourage local businesses to participate we will allow businesses to put in interim claims for reimbursement at the end of December and the end of January (some small businesses have previously declined to participate because of the impact on their cash flow). We will also promise to process their claims within 14 days.

### **For decision**

1. To agree that the face value of the 2017 Frodsham Christmas Gift Vouchers should be £10.
2. To agree to limit the issue of vouchers, on a "first-come, first-served" basis to ensure its liability does not exceed the budgeted figure of £12,000.
3. To agree the proposed timetable.
4. To approve the expenditure of:
  - £300 for printing the resident application form in the September edition of Frodsham Life
  - £175 for printing the blank numbered vouchers
5. To agree the proposed administrative changes.