Report to Community Committee 14 August 2018

Over 70s Christmas Gift Voucher Scheme 2018

Demand for the scheme

In 2017 we issued 1,050 vouchers, and 967 (92%) 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 three years due to our aging population.

The budget for the scheme in 2018 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 2017.

Timetable

The proposed timetable for the 2018 scheme is:

Advertise voucher scheme in Frodsham Life 23% of application in 2017 came from Frodsham Life.	Thursday 30 August 2018
Closing date for businesses and organisations *(so they can display posters encouraging residents to apply)*	Friday 5 October 2018
Closing date for resident applications	Friday 2 November 2018
Vouchers available for councillors to distribute	Tuesday 13 November 2018
Deadline for distributing vouchers	Saturday 24 November 2018 *(Day of Frodsham Christmas Festival)*
Deadline for residents to redeem vouchers	Thursday 31 January 2019
Deadline for businesses and organisations to redeem vouchers	Thursday 28 February 2019
Deadline for FTC to reimburse businesses and organisations	Thursday 30 March 2019

There will inevitably be some late applications. It is recommended that the absolute cut-off date for businesses and application is 2 November and for residents (subject to the numbers received by the published cut-off date not exceeding the budget), 23 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 2018 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

The voucher designed with a perforated removable section that will be labelled with the recipient's name and address worked well last year so it is recommended to continue with this design, which:

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

The vouchers are numbered sequentially by the printer, and the voucher number will be recorded in the Council's records against the details of the resident it is 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 designing and printing vouchers and posters (using Hawk Media, who designed and printed the Festival of Walks leaflet and the Annual Report) will be £140. The cost in 2017 was £175.

It was decided by Community Committee in April that all the vouchers within a ward, including care homes, caravan parks etc, should be distributed by councillors in that ward.

For decision

1. To agree that the face value of the 2018 Frodsham Christmas Gift Vouchers should be £10.

2. To agree the proposed timetable.

3. To approve the expenditure of:

   - £300 for printing the resident application form in the September edition of Frodsham Life

   - £140 for printing the blank numbered vouchers