

Attendees: Hilary Goodreid – Town Clerk  
Sue Merriman – Brereton Millions  
Dave – Rugeley Community Church  
Richard – Rugeley Community Church  
Niamh Mahon – Town Council  
Sarah Langdon – Brereton Grows  
Michelle Cliffe – Support Staffordshire  
Olivia Lyons – Town Council  
Pat Ansell – Chair of Town Council  
Chris Fielding – Rugeley Community Church

Chris – Rugeley Community Church – runs the Community Centre – the old youth centre. Develop the community centre as a hub of activities in a safe space where everyone is welcome. Hosts different providers rather than social hiring of rooms. Hosts the Rugeley Food Bank on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Runs the ACTIVE8. Done What's On Where directory – shows all local agencies and groups as much as possible. There are over 300 activities in the town. Sent a bag to 200 local businesses with food and support. Funded taxis to enable those in need to get to Roman Way hotel to get vaccine. It's very easy to find yourself in financial crisis e.g. having to take unpaid leave to support a child and the Community Church will support through this. If individuals get a red voucher, they can come in and get a 3-day emergency food parcel. Want to properly equip people to get out of crisis and stay out of crisis. The giving of food is a sticking plaster – need to look at what the underlying economic issues are. Community Church will act as a signpost as well for other organisations.

Dave runs ACTIVE8 – started in 2018 with the idea that this is a FIT and FED project – supports families that have children on free school meals – this causes problems in the community as children become isolated and do not participate in activities as much as other students. Some of these children are losing 80% of activity levels over the summer holidays. The club is aimed at primary school children with their parents / guardians with them. Provide breakfast and lunch and offer craft and arts and gardening activities. Have branched out to operate in other school holidays not just the summer break.

Had big plans for 2020. Easter just came and went while ACTIVE8 rethought the programme and started back up with home deliveries – over 4 weeks in August. On Mondays would take out a craft bag with science experiments, origami, make it kits etc + a food parcel for a couple of meals. Wednesday – sent out pre-cooked meal for every member of the family. Reaction was incredible. The children got much needed mental stimulation and parents got support. In October, they ran a sports session and then supported Halloween with a Lights Party. At Christmas, sent out activities – online demonstration for making mince pies and packs of the ingredients were sent out. January – sent out a pick up box – few goodies and books for children which was well received. February – back to food parcels with materials to make pancakes. Easter – did a craft bag and food bag.

Thinking now about the summer, we are looking to getting back to operating from the centre. However, since Covid, we are going out to more families. Easter – 104 children and 110 adults – need to think about how they can develop this summer. What has been really missed is the meeting together.

Children's sports and performing arts have started back up, but older peoples badminton and art clubs are not yet back. Looking to support Cannock Chase Can – healthy eating and exercise. Addressing things like antisocial behaviour.

Anyone in the town can suddenly find themselves in crisis.

Sue – Brereton Millions – was gifted £1m through the lottery and not allowed to spend outside Brereton Ravenhill Borders. This has had challenges. Received so many volunteers and donations from supermarkets. All started in pandemic when Sue came across an older lady who was too scared to go to the shops and hadn't eaten for days. Realise that there was many more people in the same situation. The team knocked on every door in the village and saw that need to much bigger than anticipated. Volunteering during this time grew and grew. Thanks to all the volunteers. The volunteers will also say that action through this group kept them going as well.

Rugeley Town Councillors have supported delivering food parcels, doing buddy chats, funding art bags etc. The support still continues. Always need more volunteers. Looking now to run a budgeting course to help individuals with finances. Sarah will be starting a Cooking on a Budget course. Crafting Buddies and Woodworking buddies started. Also developing a mental health group for older people. Also have a youth group to create younger volunteering - have a fishing youth group.

Brereton Millions is halfway<sup>[RT1]</sup> through the plan and looking for ideas that will take this forward. Brereton Grows began three years ago – fruit and veg planters around the village. Maintained by the community and grow produce that community can crop. Developing a course to help people cook from scratch. Planning a route to see the planters which will encourage exercise while collecting food. When schools started to open, ran schemes to get children out and growing their own food.

Sue teamed up with Olivia to develop the Community Table through Chase Lighthouse project – this takes food about to be thrown away by supermarkets. Initially food was delivered – then this moved to a community table to encourage people to take a break and get exercise coming to the table.

Olivia is looking to keep the Community Table going so people can drive by and drop in to get the food.

Michelle – responding to local need – this is community development and social action that make a difference to local residents.

These groups are key anchor organisations that deliver locally. Support Staffordshire are celebrating volunteers. There has been a massive increase in people wanting to be involved. Cannock Chase Volunteer Star Awards will celebrate these volunteers, . Food banks offer the support to the community tables. Need to understand why there is this need in the community though – what are the longer term solutions.

Chris Fielding – need to look at what happens next – helping the town to recover from COVID. Serious impact on physical and mental health. Still a lot of work to be done within the area so people don't have to travel out to Cannock and surrounding towns.

Judith – having cooking skills is important as well as cooking on a budget. If there are areas that could be worked to to get skills back up. Need to equip people with the skills to manage finance / get and retain a job / learn to cook and prepare fresh food. May have to

look at new training to support that. Are there people in the town that could teach these courses? **Building Resilience rather than Reliance.** Sustainability of the funding for these projects is important. It is important to realise the other organisations that operate in Staffordshire that can support these community ideas.

Opportunities for all sorts of links – Community Church looking to link with an organization providing healthy eating over the summer months. Also looking at building reading and arts initiatives. The dignity and respect afforded to all those in need is incredible.