

12. THE KEEP SAFE INITIATIVE

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services advising of proposals to establish “Keep Safe Places” at a range of council facilities across West Lothian.

The Keep Safe Initiative worked with a network of local businesses such as shops, libraries and cafes who had agreed to make their premises a “Keep Safe Place” where vulnerable members of the public could go if they felt frightened, stressed or were the victim of crime when out in the community. The initiative was supported by Police Scotland and the I Am Me Charity.

Members of the public wishing to use the initiative were issued with a contact card containing their details. Businesses taking place in the initiative were issued with a Keep Safe sticker to display in their premises window. The service was provided free of charge by the I Am Me Charity and training for staff in participating premises was provided free of charge by Police Scotland.

Council agreed on 22 January 2019 that officers should identify suitable council premises across the county that could potentially provide a Keep Safe Place for vulnerable members of the public.

It was considered that prominent public buildings in accessible locations would best serve the aims of the initiative and that council Partnership Centres would be particularly well suited for the role. Therefore it was proposed that the opportunity for establishing a Keep Safe Place at each partnership centre would be explored.

In considering this matter, officers had concluded that properties within the council’s school estate should be disregarded on safety and logistical grounds. Community Education Centres were also discounted on the basis that these were leased to and run by individual management committees with widely varying opening hours, facilities and staffing capacities.

Preliminary discussions had also been held with representatives from West Lothian Leisure, who had expressed a willingness to explore opportunities for establishing Keep Safe Places at suitable Xcite locations.

The report concluded that the Keep Safe initiative could make a significant difference to the lives of vulnerable members of the community in times of need and distress and that it was proposed that officers work with Police Scotland and I Am Me Charity to explore opportunities for establishing Keep Safe Places throughout West Lothian.

A further update on progress would be provided to the Panel in due course.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Considers and notes the content of the report; and
2. Notes that it was planned to present a further update to the Panel in due course.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To record a note of thanks to officers for the work done to date so soon after agreement by Council.