

Introduction from Cllr Donna Higgins

Please accept my apologies for not being available to you today. Liz has worked with myself and officers at West Suffolk Council to draw up BRAN funding to support your ideas of how we can build resilience and Nutrition in our communities.

The funds are from a central pot that the leaders of all the Suffolk Councils release funding for, and is intended to help each district support food provision where people are facing difficulties. Not all districts call it BRAN.

I think it has become fairly evident that for many, an occasional emergency parcel, while often necessary, is not always the answer. There is an ongoing difficulty facing a growing number of people from all backgrounds to access sustainable and affordable nutrition.

The causes are not all the same but certainly finance features very heavily.

How we make use of the donations from supermarkets and food that could be destined for waste is obviously key. but maybe with a small financial contribution more balanced nutrition could be achieved. Or maybe we could get the community growing some food of its own.

In my experience people do not just want a hand out, they want a hand to help find a way out of their situation and with the right kind of support does not have to go on indefinitely.

There are many good examples of inspired work, but I would like to draw your attention to the models provided by Bridge Community Church, in my ward in Bury St Edmunds, who offer a community shop to local residents who join their club. They have access several times a week to food prices maybe only 20% of what they would in a supermarket.

The Racing Centre in Newmarket have used funding from West Suffolk Council to set up a similar facility which serves anyone from Newmarket. The food is carefully itemised to ensure that every basket has a balanced and nutritious family meal but is based on choice and people have the status of a customer.

In both these examples the membership of the club is also backed up with financial advice and access to information about benefits as well as recipe ideas. Membership is reviewed with customers on a regular basis. At the Bridge people who used to be customers now volunteer to run the shop.

I would urge anyone who would like to know more to talk to Stephanie Edmans at West Suffolk Council who can help you arrange a visit to the Racing Centre.

There will be other ideas about how to Build Resilience and Nutrition - no one model will suit all. We are keen to learn about how you think your organisation can address the issues and to receive applications for consideration. We can fund training, equipment and infrastructure needs, but we need you to have the initiatives.