

MEETING:	Penistone Area Council
DATE:	Thursday, 4 June 2020
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

Present Councillors Barnard (Chair), Greenhough, Hand-Davis, Kitching and Wilson

38 Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests

No Members declared an interest in any item on the agenda.

39 Welcome and Introductions

Matt Bell was welcomed to the meeting in his new role as Senior Management Team Link Officer. All other introductions were dispensed with as officers and Members knew each other.

40 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Area Council meeting held on 13th February, 2020

The Area Council received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th February, 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Penistone Area Council meeting held on 13th February, 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

41 Covid-19 Presentation

David Robinson, Service Director Customer Information and Digital Services, Phil Hollingsworth, Service Director Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities and Elaine Equeall, Penistone Area Council Manager were welcomed to the meeting to present the item.

An overview of the strategic approach was provided, acknowledging that Covid-19 was different to previous incidents due to its length and ongoing impact. It was noted that responses needed to be agile and adaptive.

However, the pandemic also offered opportunities to realign values and to create a new normal. Members heard how the Government had drafted a recovery and renewal strategy, and one was in development at a South Yorkshire level. Barnsley plans would align and be complementary. It was noted future plans needed to be interactive, in order to respond to the need for services to be turned on and off in relation to further peaks. It was also noted that responses would be different depending on the needs of particular groups of people, including those shielding.

Three horizons were considered – h1 immediate recovery steps, h2 post-peak recovery steps and h3 realising the recovery objectives. It was suggested that Barnsley was moving into h2, with lockdown being lifted, and that this was a period of

innovation. As Barnsley moves forward the h3 horizon will be the future that we want with the outcomes Barnsley desires.

Members heard how the Council's recovery strategy encompassed 5 points; Humanitarian – Health and Wellbeing; Business Economy; Building Resilience; Education and Attainment; and Infrastructure and the Environment. It was recognised that all of which needed to be underpinned by the financial stability of the Council.

Members noted the steps being undertaken to develop and implement the recovery strategy, including conducting impact analysis, considering what services need to be restarted, maintained, or discontinued, and the need to monitor, learn and be adaptive going forward. It was noted that plans required the contribution of a wide range of partners across Barnsley.

In considering the role of Area Councils, the valuable contribution they played in responding to the crisis through the flexing of commissioned services the focus of community organisations was acknowledged, as was the role they would play in assisting recovery.

Members noted that, in light of the current financial position, the Council was reviewing all budgets and service areas to ensure they remained relevant in relation to Covid-19 and recovery efforts. Members were reminded of the cessation of all non-essential expenditure earlier in the year.

For the Area Council, the overall budget remained unaltered for 2020/21, but it was suggested that there was a need to review priorities and commissioning intentions to ensure that they were still relevant.

Those present heard of the anticipated challenges ahead, which included poverty and worklessness; schooling and education; mental health and emotional wellbeing; re-establishing the fabric of society; and impacts on health and wellbeing from a reduced accessing of services.

However, it was noted that the Council's strategic direction such as in relation to digital, an inclusive economy and Zero40 remained relevant. It was also suggested that the pandemic had offered opportunities, with agile working potentially supporting more district centres, the establishment of support networks in the communities, and a greater insight into those who are most vulnerable in communities.

Members were reminded of the guidance issued in relation to Ward Alliance Funds, and that the base budget of £10,000 per ward would remain but plans for an additional £10,000 had been paused due to the current financial situation. It was emphasised that Ward Alliance expenditure should support recovery efforts, with the only exception being where finance has already been approved and local businesses have committed resources.

Although there was an interest in re-establishing community events, it was acknowledged that this was not appropriate in the current climate, but that this position would be reviewed for 2021/22.

Members noted the previous requirement for Ward Alliance Funds to match 50% of their budgets with external finance or volunteer time, and that this would be difficult to achieve and would therefore be relaxed for the current financial year.

An update was provided in relation to the provision of grass cutting, which had been impacted on from prioritising domestic waste collection. It was noted that that this would now recommence, with the backlog being addressed in due course.

Members heard of the work of the Penistone Area Team in using community networks to map what was happening in response to the pandemic and provide support. Noted was the phenomenal response from communities throughout the area, including from groups such as Huskar Helping Hands and Love Thy Penistone. The Area Team had worked to support and promote activity and provided localised support for the Councils Emergency Contact Centre, including delivering 4,000 postcards advertising the service, with the help of partners.

Wellbeing boxes had been delivered to older people, with those in receipt identified through Age UK.

In addition to the community groups efforts, Community Responders had also provided support, and the Area Team had worked with Barnsley CVS to provide training for volunteers, and insure the correct use of PPE. The responders predominantly provided support with shopping and befriending. 19 Community Responders had provided support, with an additional 6 recently recruited to replace a number of those originally recruited who had now returned to work.

There had been 6 requests for shopping, and 22 for befriending, and it was noted that not all requests were from older people, but from other age groups that were shielding. It was suggested that requests for shopping may curtail with the lifting of restrictions, but that the need for befriending would likely continue.

Members heard of the flexing of contracts during the pandemic in order to continue to meet the needs of the community.

Age UK had continued to target the vulnerable, particularly those with no family or friends, with 60 service users being supported with shopping and befriending. It was noted that support was being provided to consider the next phase of delivery, which would hopefully include more activities.

The contract with Twiggs had been flexed in order to provide support for Neighbourhood Services, focusing on priority areas. Contact with and support of groups had been maintained, with work being undertaken by Twiggs and volunteers on sites on their own and on different days.

Support from DIAL and CAB had moved online and on to the telephone, and although figures were not available for the area, demand was thought to be high.

Members heard of the extension of the grant provided to South Pennine Community Transport which had continued to provide a service for older and vulnerable residents to access shopping. It was acknowledged that the service would require review in light of the current situation.

Those present were reminded of the Area Council Priorities:- Helping People to Connect Better; Environment; Health and Wellbeing; Support for Young People; and The Local Economy including Tourism.

Noted was the financial situation, with around £48,000 unallocated in the current financial year, £115,000 carried forward from 2019/20 and around £61,000 remaining unallocated in the Working Together Fund. Even taking into account the likely continuation of contracts due to expire in 2020/21, around £93,000 would remain in the Area Council budget and around £52,000 in the working together fund.

42 Discussion: reflections on the presentation and how the Area Council can assist our communities in recovery

Members were reminded of the 5 recovery priorities:- Humanitarian – Health and Wellbeing; Business and Economy; Building Resilience; Education and Attainment; and Infrastructure and Environment and were invited to consider what aspects of the Area Council plans aligned to these and could continue, perhaps with some adaption, what didn't align and should cease, and where gaps would be that required addressing.

Members heard of the impact analysis underway, and the complicated picture this provided. A wide range of impacts had been seen from a lack of education to the inability to do maintenance on highways. It was noted that this information would be shared in due course.

It was suggested that the priorities of the Area Council did largely align and delivery to those boroughwide. Focus had been on building resilience for vulnerable and isolated older people, for young people, and for those with debt issues.

With regards to the economy, it was suggested that the impact on the town centre, small businesses, and the rural economy may wish to be considered. It was noted that though the Principal Towns programme would assist the town, but that the contraction in tourism and the inability to hold events would have a negative impact.

It was suggested that the financial impact on residents would be great, with some furloughed residents struggling to meet their financial demands.

Also noted was the impact on the mental health of residents, with young people previously highlighted as an area of concern, and that this was an area under consideration by the Area Council.

With difficulties using public transport, the promotion of active travel was noted, at it was noted that there were a number of schemes in development. Funding had been secured for a pilot project in Barnsley Town Centre and funding was also available to improve the A628 from Penistone to the Flouch for walking and cycling.

The issue of public toilet provision was discussed, and it was noted that consideration was being given to how these could be opened in a safe way.

Members wish to acknowledge the work of volunteers during these uncertain times and the amount of help provided to those most vulnerable and isolated.

RESOLVED:- that further discussion takes place in order to consider where Area Council support be best provided, and that the outcome of this be considered at a future meeting of the Area Council.

43 Close of the meeting

The Chair declared the meeting closed.

Chair