

MEETING:	North East Area Council
DATE:	Thursday, 4 June 2020
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY

MINUTES

Present Councillors Hayward (Chair), Cheetham, Cherryholme, Ennis OBE, Felton, Higginbottom, Houghton CBE, Makinson, McCarthy, Richardson and Wraith MBE

47 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

48 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed participants, the Press and the public to the meeting, highlighting that this meeting was to be streamed live over the internet and that a recording would be available on the Barnsley MBC website shortly after the conclusion of the meeting.

49 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of North East Area Council held on 30th January, 2020

The meeting considered the minutes from the previous meeting of the North East Area Council held on 30th January 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the North East Area Council held on 30th January 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

50 Covid-19 Presentation

David Robinson, Service Director Customer Information and Digital Services, and Phil Hollingsworth, Service Director Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities were welcomed to the meeting to deliver a presentation on BMBC's Covid Recovery Plan

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

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 a recovery plan was also in development at a South Yorkshire level, with Barnsley plans aligned and complementary to this. 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 and 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. Barnsley is Currently in the 'collision zone' where all 3 horizons meet.

A 5 point recovery and renewal strategy is proposed, encompassing: Humanitarian (Health and Wellbeing), Business Economy, Building Resilience, Education and Attainment and finally Infrastructure and the Environment. This will go to Cabinet over the next few weeks. An impact analysis will be conducted, what's stopping, starting and continuing will be identified, the key recovery actions and plan will be set out, a 100 day recovery plan will be implemented alongside ongoing monitoring, learning, testing and adapting. It was recognised that all of these need to be underpinned by the financial stability of the Council.

We have already seen how commissioned services and community organisations have flexed to adapt their service models and continue support to local communities. However, there is a need to review funding assumptions made for all budgets in 2020/21. Funding allocations for area councils remain unchanged but there is a need to consider whether the planned priorities remain the same. There is likely to be an exacerbated impact on poverty and worklessness, education, mental health and emotional wellbeing, economic impact, coupled with a need to re-establish the fabric of society and the health and wellbeing impact from lack of service availability.

There is an opportunity to build on the digital agenda, inclusive economy, more agile working, changing support networks and examples of greater community spirit as exemplified by the Thursday night support for NHS and care workers.

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 was to be relaxed for the current financial year.

An update was provided in relation to the provision of grass cutting, the schedules of which had been impacted on from prioritising domestic waste collection. It was noted that that this would now recommence as staff return to substantive grass cutting duties from 8th June and the backlog being addressed in due course.

Caroline Donovan, North East Area Council Manager, outlined the local response to the pandemic. Over 100 wellbeing boxes had been delivered to elderly residents, over 300 easter eggs distributed, 28 families provided with slow cookers and the ingredients for healthy meals on a regular basis, and currently over 400 activity packs for tots, juniors and teens are being made up. Local volunteer Community Responders have worked with people who are either shielding or have been assessed as vulnerable. They have all been fully trained and provided with PPE to support shopping and befriending in their local communities.

Contracts and grants have been flexed and detailed information was provided of what this 'flexing' looked like. Current priorities and commissioning intentions were outlined, together with contract end dates. The Council was asked to consider the 5 recovery priorities; which initiatives align and can continue and which don't align.

RESOLVED that Members note the presentation.

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

Councillors were invited to ask questions on the presentation and how the Area Council can assist the community in recovery. A number of issues were highlighted including specific items of note:

The Principal Towns project will still be going ahead. Phase 1 of the project has been secured so projects will be delivered if this is what members want although the timescales may change. The Public Toilets scheme in Cudworth is going ahead unless plans are to be amended, although there may be some contractual delays. Indeed, contracts on the majority of projects have been signed so will go ahead.

There are no proposals to change governance arrangements at the moment and meetings will have to take place 'virtually'. In the future more agile working from district centres may be possible. The use of technology means people can be a lot more flexible, including working from home and in local offices, dependent on the individual and the service they work for. Consideration will be given over the next few months as to how to get district centres up and running. When shops and local businesses are able to reopen they will need help to re-establish and work safely and may need signage, advice around social distancing and queue management. Members were aware of a number of local businesses who have managed the situation well with regard to queuing and keeping customers safe.

It was confirmed that Barnsley is NOT a hotspot for Coronavirus. The figures for the period between 6th and 23rd May increased due to the fact that testing was stepped up, particularly in care homes. Lots of positive results came back during this period which seemed to indicate disproportionate positive results, which engendered this headline. It is a similar story in Barnsley to the rest of Yorkshire. Incidences and numbers of deaths are slowing but people are still catching the disease and people continue to lose their lives. It was highlighted that where communities have poor health outcomes generally and those with underlying health issues are more at risk. Barnsley will also feel the economic impact due to current levels of deprivation, which is why recovery planning is so important. Until a vaccine is developed, this situation will need to be managed as effectively as possible.

Government guidance and advice from Public Health is still awaited in terms of reopening community venues. Particular challenges exist with regard to libraries and managing numbers in the building. In terms of risk assessments, assistance will be given where possible in accordance with government guidance. Barnsley CVS will advise and assist organisations across the area.

RESOLVED that Members note the discussion and information provided.

52 Procurement and Finance Update

The Area Council Manager introduced this item. The Members agreed that the North East Area Council's priorities should continue as follows:

- A Thriving and Vibrant Economy
- Love Where You Live
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Young People

Members were then asked to consider several financial recommendations in the light of Barnsley MBC's Recovery priorities.

RESOLVED that:

- i. the Executive Director for Communities be authorised to complete all the necessary paperwork in order to waive contract procedure rules to extend the current Apprentices and Employability commission until the end of March 2021 at a cost £145,000.
- ii. The North East Area Council devolve a further £40,000 to the Ward Alliances, at an additional £10,000 per Ward Alliance.
- iii. The North East Area Council allocate a further £55,000 to the Youth Development Working Together Fund.
- iv. Age UK Barnsley is awarded a further £4,000 to continue the Information, Advice and Guidance service for a further 12 months, and
- v. A £20,000 contingency fund is allocated to further strengthen the recovery of environmental improvements across the North East Area Council.

53 Close of the meeting

Chair