

MEETING:	Dearne Area Council
DATE:	Monday, 26 July 2021
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Reception Room - Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Noble (Chair), Cain, Coates, Danforth and Gollick

8 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

9 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Dearne Area Council held on 24th May, 2021 (Dac.26.07.2021/2)

The meeting received the minutes from the previous meeting of Dearne Area Council.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Dearne Area Council meeting held on 24th May, 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

10 Children's Social Care Assessments - Pam Allen (Dac.26.07.2021/3)

Pam Allen, Interim Service Director, Children's Social Care, was welcomed to the meeting.

Members were made aware of the Child Welfare Inequalities Project. It was noted that over the past decade children's social workers had focused on child protection and had not always taken into account the difficulties associated with poverty. Of late the numbers of children subject to child protection plans had grown. These often featured factors such as alcohol or substance misuse, which were also associated with worklessness and poverty.

The project aimed to influence the thinking of social workers, increase their understanding of poverty, and promote reflective discussions to help understand the community.

Members noted that workshops had been held with social workers, and that the research resonated with staff. Practical steps had included the changing of child protection templates to take account of poverty, and training arranged with partner agencies and BMBC departments to increase awareness of housing and benefits advice. The support available to residents and families in the area was highlighted, and it was suggested that it would be useful for social workers to be aware.

The cost of children being taken into care was discussed, as was the need to provide support packages to parents at an earlier time, which could lead to better outcomes and lower costs.

A suggestion was made for social workers to engage with those who had lived experiences of poverty to aid understanding. A number of Councillors agreed to volunteer their experiences.

Though this work did not have additional financial costs, it was acknowledged that there would be time implications, and the impact of this was discussed. However, Members noted that there had been six additional social workers and six additional family support workers recruited in the past six months. Also noted was the consultation on the national review of reforming social work and its potential impact.

Questions were raised in relation to statistics in the Dearne area, and it was noted that these could be circulated directly to Members.

Those present discussed the positive impact HomeStart services had previously provided, and the impact of peer support between parents was acknowledged. A pilot to re-establish something similar this in the area was suggested.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11 Shaping Places Update - Andrea Fitzgerald (Dac.26.07.2021/4)

Members welcomed Andrea Fitzgerald, Group Leader – Strategy and Policy, to the meeting.

A brief overview of the Shaping Places for Healthier Lives programme was provided, which was funded by the Health Foundation and designed to test approaches to addressing wider determinants of health.

There had been three bidding rounds, with the number of bids reduced from 32 to five. This bid focused on Goldthorpe, adding value to the work led by the Towns Board and would result in £300,000 over three years if successful. The proposal had been led by Employment and Skills, Public Health and Enterprising Barnsley, but had involved wider stakeholders.

Members noted the development of the bid from 2019 to present day, which included workshops, discussion with the Health and Wellbeing Board, and community research.

Those present were made aware of the anonymised shared stories of residents involved in the research. These included a positive perspective, with the community being safe, with a good sense of community, but issues with health and limited employment opportunities were common. Many in the community required support, but often did not recognise this until crisis point.

The proposal aimed to raise awareness of triggers and support available, with community points able to refer to support services.

Members made the case for training to be linked to employment opportunities locally. Training also needed to make use of familiar local venues and at accessible times to avoid unnecessary barriers. It was noted that support to cope with change was also required.

Queries were raised in relation to parts of the community where relying on benefits was the norm. It was noted that there were opportunities for two week taster sessions of potential jobs, with associated careers advice. Members discussed the previous success of the Future Jobs Fund in assisting residents re-join the labour market, and the potential for similar to be provided through the City Region.

With regards to work with schools it was noted that this focused on careers, and supporting meaningful encounters with employers, which was promoted through the Employer Promise.

Members heard that the outcome of the bid would be known in early August 2021. Should the bid be unsuccessful the learning would prove to be useful and further funding sought. However, if successful, work would be undertaken to ensure the focus was still relevant and identify 'community anchors to engage them in the project. A lead would be appointed for the work, and a delivery plan and management structure would then be developed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12 Performance Report Q1 2021/22 (Dac.26.07.2021/5)

The Area Council Manager referred to the performance of Twiggs Grounds Maintenance, with 38 events being undertaken with the quarter. 157 volunteers (52 of which were new), were engaged and 314 volunteer hours had been given. 579 bags of rubbish had been collected, with 10 fly tipping cases reported.

B:friend had supported 70 older neighbours who were isolated. 330 hours had been provided by befrienders and staff had made 62 hours of calls and visits. 5 new referrals had been received, with some from social care. It was noted that there had been some difficulties encouraging referrals from agencies to many Area Council services across the borough. Members discussed the positive impact of the service, and it was noted that some outdoor social activities had taken place, as well as telephone and virtual socials, but now face to face activities had resumed.

DECV had lower numbers of learners than previous quarters, but had assisted 26 individuals, 10 of which were new. Four learners had gone into employment and four into further training. Members discussed the levels of literacy and numeracy in the community, with a suggestion that more support may be required in this area.

The Housing Officer had made 144 reports and supported the improvement of 31 properties. 54 incidences of fly tipping had been reported and 31 households supported to responsibly recycle or dispose of waste.

Members noted that support from CAB and DIAL had been provided via the telephone during the quarter, with CAB supporting 38 people with 75 issues. Assistance had been provided to help claim over £24,000 of benefits.

DIAL had received 159 enquiries within the quarter and 150 residents had reported reduced anxiety as a result of using the service. As a result of support £59,294 of benefits had been claimed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

13 Dearne Area Council Commissioning Decisions (Dac.26.07.2021/6)

The Area Council Manager reminded members that the Social Connectivity Project had originally commenced in 2018, funded in part by Nesta, and had delivered a successful service in the area. In January 2020, the Area Council had agreed to fund the service for a year with the option to extend this for a further year. The first year of the service was due to end in August 2021, and therefore Members considered a number of options, including extending the service for a further year.

Members were reminded that the service level agreement to provide the Housing Officer post was due to end in January, 2022. Options were discussed; however it was recommended that the post be extended to the end of the financial year. Noted was the relationship the officer had with the community, and the impact the post had within the area.

Those present discussed the Assisted Employment service which was due to end on 31st March, 2022. The service had made a significant impact to many who accessed it, and the officer in question had a rapport with residents. Members considered the service and the continued need to support individuals to improve their skills and re-join the labour market.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that approval be given to extend the Social Connectivity Project for a further year until 1st August, 2022 at a cost of £27,000
- (ii) That approval be given to extend the Housing Officer post until 31st March, 2022 at a cost of £5,432;
- (iii) That an Assisted Employment Service be recommissioned at an indicative cost of £34,000 per annum for one year, with the option to extend this for two further periods of one year, with a view to the service commencing on 1st April, 2022.

14 Finance Report (Dac.26.07.2021/7)

An overview of the financial situation was provided by the Area Council Manager. The Area Council commenced the financial year with a budget of £208,783.34, which included underspend carried forward from 2020/21. £175,000 had been allocated to four different services, leaving £33,783.34 for allocation.

The Dearne Development Fund had £5,378.41 carried forward to the 2021/22 budget, which was increased by £30,000 following discussion at the Area Council in May 2021. Therefore £35,378.41 remained in the fund.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

15 Notes from the Dearne Ward Alliances (Dac.26.07.2021/8)

The meeting received the notes from the Dearne North Ward Alliance held 18th May and 15th June, 2021 and Dearne South Ward Alliance held on 20th May and 15th June, 2021.

At their meeting on 20th May, Dearne South Ward Alliance had received an update relating to Principal Towns and considered three applications for funding. Updates were also received in relation to a number of projects, and community notice boards were also discussed.

At the following meeting on 17th June, projects taking place over the summer and covid recovery projects were discussed, as was the progress made with Tiny Forest.

Dearne North had discussed Beat the Street, and had discussed the accounts of the Ward Alliance on 18th June. The 20th May meeting had considered one application for funding, and had discussed the Health and Wellbeing sessions, with such as pilates and tai chi arranged. Group updates had also been provided.

Members discussed the hanging baskets on the high streets throughout the area and with all comments positive. Thanks were given for all involved in the project.

RESOLVED that notes from the Ward Alliances be received.

16 Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds including 2020/21 Performance Reports (Dac.26.07.2021/9)

The Area Council Manager provided an update in relation to the Ward Alliance Funds. Dearne South had an opening balance of £11,317.72 for 2021/22, funded three projects, and had £7,017.72 remaining to be allocated.

Dearne North started the financial year with £10,182.92 and had also funded three projects, leaving £5,682.92 to distribute.

RESOLVED that the report on Ward Alliance Funds and the Performance Reports be noted.

Chair