

MEETING:	Penistone Area Council
DATE:	Thursday, 2 December 2021
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Penistone Town Hall

MINUTES

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

23 Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests

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

24 Minutes of the Penistone Area Council meeting held on 7th October, 2021 (Pac.02.12.2021/2)

The Area Council received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th October, 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Penistone Area Council meeting held on 7th October, 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

25 Notes from the Penistone Ward Alliance held on 11th November, 2021 (Pac.02.12.2021/3)

The meeting received the notes from the Penistone Ward Alliance held on 11th November, 2021.

RESOLVED that the notes from the Penistone Ward Alliance held on 11th November, 2021 be received.

26 Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds (Pac.02.12.2021/4)

The Area Council Manager spoke to the report and members noted its content. The out of school activities funds were briefly mentioned with an overall agreement that they be kept aside for the February Half Term.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

27 Performance Report Q2 (Pac.02.12.2021/5)

The Area Council Manager provided Members with an overview of performance for Quarter 2 and all contracted Services.

Members were reminded of the Area Council priorities and which Area Council funded contracts supported them. Members had their attention drawn to the significant increase in volunteer numbers both in Adults but particularly with under 18s, which was a consequence of new projects emerging supporting young people.

The Community Car Share Scheme had also seen a significant rise in people using the service. Members commented that whilst it may have been unfair to compare numbers to 2020, it was seen as an encouraging indicator of how things were moving forward in the journey out of the pandemic.

The Clean, Green and Tidy contract delivered by Twiggs Ground Maintenance continued to support volunteers and make progress with their outcomes with 214 volunteers being supported covering 551 volunteer hours. The number of rubbish bags collected was down from the previous quarter due to that period including different activities that had taken place around the Great British Spring Clean event. The numbers of Groups and parishes supported had increased to 13 from a target of 10 and work with 10 individual businesses had taken place with a further 14 joint working activities. In addition, support had been provided for 6 individual groups, 23 additional projects had commenced, and 17 individual litter picks had taken place. Members were informed that a new apprentice had been appointed due to the previous one moving on as part of the Job Ready Programme and that Twiggs were also involved in the restoration of benches identified as part of the Age friendly Barnsley 'Take a Seat' Campaign.

Age UK, delivering the support to vulnerable and isolated older people, had supported 238 people, made 517 interventions and had worked with 39 volunteers, with an estimated gain in benefits of £35,125.11.

Lot 1 focussed on social action and volunteering and quarter 2 had seen an increase in face to face interactions following the lifting of restrictions and an uptake in trips out for older people with one significant age friendly event at Cubley Hall taking place which had been well attended. 11 new service users had been provided with information and advice, 28 community car journeys had taken place and two new volunteers were in the processes of being trained. It was noted that there had been an increase in more complex needs resulting in the need for referrals to the Dementia Alliance and also an increase of falls in the home resulting in physical activities being increased with an offer of Tai Chi, Healthy Bones classes and walking groups.

Lot 2 concentrated on community activities and supporting people to become active and connect back into groups with an emphasis on health and wellbeing now that restrictions had been lifted. A number of activities had taken place across the Penistone Area with 2 new sessions started, one being a singing group at St Johns Church and a new group geared towards dementia held at the Happy Vibes Café in Penistone Leisure Centre. Members were informed that a survey had taken place in Carlecoates, Crow Edge and Dunford Bridge in order to establish whether there would be any interest in those areas for local group activities, once the results from the survey are collated members would be informed of the outcome. Men in Sheds had made links with Penistone Theatre Group and were working on the set design for their annual Pantomime with the potential to use the workshop in future.

Lot 3 focussed on the creation of SOPPA (The Supporting Older People in the Penistone Area) which was a network of people and groups who would support older and more vulnerable people in and around Penistone. Members were informed that what was happening in Penistone was significant in contributing to the Age Friendly

Barnsley Steering Group and making connections with Age Friendly Barnsley and influencing it across the Borough wide agenda.

The Barnsley Citizens Advice Service had supported 23 people and had assisted with £1million of debt management and £23,629 of claimed benefits. Members noted that the expected surge in debt recovery cases once County Courts had reopened and processed routine cases remained to be seen but that it was very much still anticipated. A wide range of issues were dealt with during the quarter with 37 issues in total, 35% of those being for benefits advice.

It was reported that the DIAL Barnsley contract had continually received high numbers focussing on benefits claims as opposed to debt recovery like the Citizens Advice contract. Members noted that 17% of advice had been around social isolation with the feeling this was around older people using the service resulting in continued work around welfare checks. 106 enquiries had been received in quarter 2, with 60 volunteer hours and £87,396 of benefits claims processed, resulting in a return of £23 for every £1 invested. Members were informed that all advice and guidance had been successfully dealt with over the telephone, but that there was an expectation for a return to face to face appointments in Penistone Town Hall in the near future once risk assessments had been made.

Members received an update that all projects funded through the Supporting Young People Grant Fund had commenced with the exception of Penistone Grammar School which had been unable to commence due to the significant impact of Covid-19 in the school.

Ad Astra had been into Penistone Grammar and supported 39 people through the 8 sessions they had delivered. 540 leaflets had been handed out and 600 conversations had been held with young people informing them of the work they were undertaking and why they were in school. One issue that had arisen was lack of confidential space but work was being undertaken to try and resolve this issue. Members were informed that some issues that had been discussed were around self-esteem, body image, diet, food issues, healthy lifestyles and concerns around positive healthy relationships. Twice weekly visits would be continued walking around the dining hall with a hope that a confidential space could be found.

Members noted that Angel Voices had carried out 5 workshops with 28 people in attendance and 13 volunteers resulting in £465 being raised for local charities from the community performance events and 13 people going on to formal training and qualifications. It was hoped that workshops would be able to move around the area but that there had been difficulties in getting in contact with people to organise these events.

The Active Minds Project, run by Penistone FM, had been launched in July, 2021 with 21 attending and taking part in podcasts for young people around their experiences during the pandemic and also links had been made with the NHS CAMHS service for referrals.

The development of a new 'Challenge' Badge project in the Girl Guides was being developed but was yet to be rolled out, 2 brownies had been declared joint winners from the competition for the design of the badge culminating in a planned activity day for the last Saturday in March, 2022.

Sporting Penistone had launched a number of activities but due to staffing changes and the effects of the pandemic some sessions were unable to commence at the time of the meeting. Of the activities that were able to commence, Smash Hit sessions were proving a success with 8 regular attendees and 14 volunteers were in training to support the Calm Kids programme which was aimed at 5-11 year olds to calm and reduce stress and anxiety and was planned to start in November/December.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

28 Procurement and Financial Update (Pac.02.12.2021/6)

The item was introduced by the Area Council Manager who drew members attention to the Supporting Vulnerable and Isolated Older People Grant.

Members were reminded that a number of contract extensions had been agreed in previous meetings in order to defer the procurement exercise for a new service and that these decisions had been made due to the impacts of the pandemic. Members were informed that a change in the procurement procedure rules required a more detailed process which would take around 3 months to complete resulting in the need for a further short term extension to the contract. Initially a 3 month extension was proposed at a cost of £17,500 but following discussions members were concerned whether that would be a long enough period of time and it was agreed that it would be more preferable to be cautious and have a 5 month extension at a pro rata cost.

Members heard how no further applications had been received for the Working Together Fund and that the figure for allocation remained at £33,699.

It was reported that the Working Together Grant Fund – Supporting Young People projects that had been funded were initially delayed in starting due to the pandemic but that 4 out of the 5 had been able to start from July, 2021 with updates on those projects being made at the meeting.

Members were informed that the Clean, Green and Tidy Service was in the second year of its contract and it was agreed that they would be asked to provide a full year 2 performance report at the Penistone Area Council meeting to be held on 10th February, 2022 ahead of any decision to continue a further years delivery.

It was noted that the Penistone Ward Alliance had commenced the 2021/22 financial year with a budget of £26,925 with a further ring fence of £10,000 to encourage groups to come forward to submit applications for summer holiday activities during 2021. Members were informed that a number of applications had been received for Ward Alliance funds resulting in further approved projects totalling £6,000 which left a budget total of £12,295.13. From the £10,000 ringfenced budget, projects totalling £1590 had been approved leaving £8410 which, if unspent would be returned to the Penistone Area Council budget. Due to the upsurge in applications being received members agreed to allocate a further £10,000 from the Penistone Area Council budget in order to support the Ward Alliance budget to the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

A briefing workshop was held on the 4th November, 2021 in order to present Penistone Area Council members with information from the Housing Stock Modelling and database report which had been commissioned by Barnsley MBC to provide a detailed housing stock condition survey, details of which were being used to create a Private Sector Housing Plan for the Borough. Members were informed that, compared to the rest of the Borough, private sector housing stock in Penistone East and West Wards demonstrated the highest risk to occupants from excess cold and fuel poverty.

Following the workshop members were asked to consider a number of options in relation to a Private Sector Housing Support Officer who, amongst other things, would be the first point of contact within the community to identify early indications of neglect and inability to cope with properties in disarray leading to a possible health hazard to those living there and/or others in the area.

Members agreed there was a need in the area for something to help tackle the issues highlighted at the workshop, but also raised their concerns as to what type of support or enforcement the Housing Officer could have against a private landlord or a householder who did not wish to, or could not afford to improve their home/living arrangements. There was also a concern that this could be seen as an interference resulting in causing offence to people.

The 4 options for members to consider were:

- Commission a full time Housing Officer post for 12 months
- Commission a half time Housing Officer post for 12 months
- Commission a half time Housing Officer post to undertake research and feasibility and report back after 6 months
- No additional support and continue as

Following a lengthy discussion, members decided that Option 3 would be the most suitable to allow for the officer appointed to report back with their findings and whether it could make a difference in the area. The Area Council Manager agreed to bring a report to a future Area Council Meeting for a decision.

RESOLVED:-

(i) that members noted the update of contracts funded by the existing Supporting Isolated and Older People Grant fund and agreed a 5 month extension from January 2022 to the end of May, 2022 at a cost of £29,166 to accommodate the procurement process for future provision in support of this priority;

(ii) that the update on the current financial position of the Penistone Working Together Fund be received;

(iii) that the update on the ringfenced funds within the existing Working Together Fund to establish specific activities that will support young people in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic be received;

(iv) that the update on the Clean, Green and Tidy contract which commenced in April, 2020 be noted and that the recommendation of a Year 2 update to be given at the Penistone Area Council meeting to be held in February 2022 be agreed;

(v) that the update on the Ward Alliance budget be noted and that the allocation of £10,000 from within the Penistone Area Council budget 2021/22 to enhance current Ward Alliance funds be agreed with approvals to be made through previously agreed mechanisms;

(vi) that the proposed options to procure a Private Sector Housing Support Officer resource be received and that Option 3 be agreed as the preferred way forward with a detailed report to be presented to members for approval at a future meeting of the Area Council; and

(vii) that the current financial position for the 2021/22 budget in light of the decisions made at the meeting be noted

Chair