

MEETING:	North Area Council
DATE:	Monday 12 September 2022
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Meeting Room 2, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Leech (Chair), T. Cave, Crisp, Denton, Hunt, Lofts, Newing, Platts and Tattersall

12 Appreciation

The Chair gave thanks to Councillor Platts for Chairing the previous meeting. He then made Members aware that Elizabeth Barnard had recently retired as Council Governance Officer and wished to place on record his thanks for the support she had provided to the Area Council. This was echoed by other Members present.

13 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

14 Minutes of the North Area Council meeting held on 18 July 2022 (Nac.12.09.2022/2)

The Area Council received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 July 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the North Area Council meeting held on the 18 July 2022 be approved as a true and correct record.

15 Fleets Project Delivery Plan and Update - Mike Winstanley

Mike Winstanley from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust was welcomed to the meeting. A recent meeting had taken place to consider what was realistically achievable on site that would serve the needs of the community and be able to be easily maintained in the long term. It was suggested that the site would lend itself to an increased access to green space. Members heard that the Section 106 finance available was around £76,000, and it was proposed that this would be used to increase access to the site via installing additional steps. This would increase safety, accessibility and help introduce new users to the site. It was noted that the installation would be prioritised and would realistically take around 2/3rd of the funds available.

Consideration would also be given to increasing biodiversity in the area through such as planting additional wildflowers and trees. This would further improve the area without increasing maintenance unnecessarily.

Members noted the potential of this being part of a wider project with the Environment Agency to consider the river, associated habitats and flood mitigation. There was the possibility of creating a country park, which would act as a valuable

green space resource for the area, unique because of its proximity to Barnsley Town Centre.

It was acknowledged that play equipment for the area, which had been previously proposed, would likely be outside the budget. It was also noted that Barnsley College had not been greatly involved to date. Due to much of the land in the area being within their ownership, it was suggested that their input going forward was crucial.

Members questioned how success would be measured on the site, and it was noted that footfall could be used, however members of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust staff could be deployed in the area to help assess the qualitative benefits from discussions with users and residents. A suggestion was made that increasing biodiversity could also be a measure of success.

Questions were raised about access for those less able, and it was suggested that ramps could be part of the designs to increase safe access.

RESOLVED that thanks be given for the update, and that the update be noted.

16 Twiggs Delivery Plan Update - Twiggs Grounds Maintenance Ltd

John Twigg from Twiggs Grounds Maintenance was welcomed to the meeting. John reminded Members that the service had been delivering community engagement and development in the area for the past 6 years.

Most recently an environmental steering group meeting had been held, where new priorities and targets had been discussed. Work was currently in a transitional phase where the emphasis would be moved from the current areas of focus to those recently agreed.

Those present heard that there was a new Team Leader in post who would act as an advocate of the service, and they would be supported by an apprentice during the forthcoming quarter. It was noted that despite some previous issues, training to support the apprenticeship was now back on track.

Attention was drawn to areas of success including with the Kexborough Memorial Garden, Mapplewell Village Hall, and with a number of schools in the area. It was noted that contact had been made with local care homes, and it was hoped an intergenerational project could be developed.

Whilst there may have been issues in previous quarters, it was noted that moving forward each Ward would be the focus of the service one day a week, with Fridays remaining flexible.

Members raised a number of queries, with the first being in relation to Poggy Pickers. It was noted that Twiggs had recently been in contact to resolve issues and dialogue would continue. Similarly, the issues with the Green Space group in Darton East were mentioned, it was also noted that these were hopefully being resolved.

Questions were asked whether delivery against the areas highlighted as priorities would be achievable, and it was noted that following the transitional phase, efforts would focus on the agreed priorities.

In relation to maximising the use of the resource, Members were reminded that in addition to the work undertaken on the ground, much project planning and organisation was undertaken.

Issues with tree survival due to vandalism were discussed, and it was noted that though vandalism had impacted on a number of trees, many more had not survived due to the extreme weather seen over the summer.

RESOLVED that thanks be given for the presentation and the responses to questions.

17 Welfare Reform Review (Nac.12.09.2022/5)

Members were reminded that the issue of the provision of welfare rights advice had been discussed previously. Although consideration had been made to increase provision centrally, this had not been possible. Therefore, any future service provided locally would be for the Area Council to decide.

Members were reminded of the current provision in the North Area, and the outcomes delivered by the service, which included £1,208,964 of benefit gain in the period September 2020 to August 2021, with £93,937 debt also handled within the period.

It was noted that provision varied across Area Councils, but the report highlighted a number of opportunities from combining the procurement and management of similar services. It was noted that there may be a number of providers, but the number of those that were AQS accredited was small.

The report provided a number of options which included commissioning a service independently in the North Area, based on local need; and to align commissioning cycles to procure with other Area Councils in individual lots.

Whilst potential benefits of combining procurement were acknowledged, there were concerns expressed about whether this would undermine the locally determined element of the service.

Members also expressed their disappointment that an expanded service could not be provided more centrally, given the increased demand due to the rising cost of living.

With the consensus that a future service should need to be suited to the needs of the North Area, it was suggested that the option to align commissioning cycles be explored.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That sections 3 to 7 of the report be referred to, and be considered, with additional insights from the anti-poverty priority working group;
- (ii) That the option to align commissioning cycles and procure provision for multiple areas, using different lots for individual area councils be preferred,

subject to the service being able to be tailored effectively to meet the needs of the North Area.

18 Future Commissioning - Cost of Living Workshop Update (Nac.12.09.2022/6)

The Area Council Manager made Members aware that workshops had been planned to consider the impacts of the increased cost of living. A number of partners who had a geographical remit had been invited to be part of the conversation, which would be facilitated by Area Council Managers supported by colleagues in Healthier Communities. It was suggested that the workshops would be useful to consider qualitative information, and to look at assets in the area to build upon, and potential opportunities.

In order to ensure maximum attendance, it was recommended that a budget for catering be made available.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the dates of the two workshops planned, as highlighted in section 8 of the report, be noted;
- (ii) That the intention for the workshops to be participatory and discussion based, be noted;
- (iii) That a total of £800 be approved to be used for catering at the two workshops.

19 Performance Report Q1 2022/23 (Nac.12.09.2022/7)

Members were referred to the Performance Report which covered the first quarter of 2022/23. The report had been compiled following monitoring meetings with providers. The report aimed to show how the services and projects helped to deliver against corporate priorities as well as those of the Area Council. Though the report was detailed, Members were aware of further detailed information which could be provided directly if they so wished.

It was noted that recruitment issues faced by Reds in the Community had been resolved and a new member of staff would be starting imminently.

Members commented on how well projects such as Ad Astra were becoming more embedded in the community, which helped to build trust and increase engagement.

Comments were received regarding the importance of case studies to stress the impact on the lives of individuals. It was noted that the anonymised case study provided by DIAL would be featured in the forthcoming Spotlight magazine.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Performance Management Report, at appendix 1, be noted.

20 Commissioning, Project Development and Finance (Nac.12.09.2022/8)

The item was introduced by the Area Council Manager. With regards to the Anti-Poverty service, it was noted that this had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

With regards to the Clean and Green Service, Members heard that the steering

group had met twice, in July and August, where discussions had taken place to ensure best value from the service. Following this, it had been agreed that the steering group would meet following the cycle of Ward Alliance meetings, and a work programme would be agreed to follow priorities agreed for each Ward.

In reference to the Housing and Cohesion Officer it was noted that the officer assigned to the area continued to deliver well.

With regards to the Stronger Communities Grant, Members heard how the opening ceremony for the Children's Cycle Path in Mapplewell Park would follow in due course and the Area Manager had recommended that the Greenspace Group invite all and Members of the grant panel.

Members noted the underspend of £76,211 and comments were made regarding the value for money achieved from all commissions and projects. It was acknowledged that workshops had been arranged to consider the outcome of the cost-of-living workshops, and any gaps in provision the Area Council may wish to consider addressing using the budget available.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the North Area Council notes the existing budget position and the existing funding commitments;
- (ii) that the update regarding the Anti-Poverty contract be noted;
- (iii) that the update regarding the Clean and Green Steering Group be noted;
- (iv) that the intention to hold two further workshops regarding the increased cost of living in October with wider stakeholder participation be noted; and
- (v) that the updated projected spend, in appendix 1, be noted.

21 Report on the use of Ward Alliance Funds (Nac.12.09.2022/9)

The Area Council Manager introduced the item, noting the current figures remaining in each Ward Alliance Fund. It was acknowledged that some Ward Alliances may have recently met, or were due to meet, which would have an impact on the values remaining. Members were reminded that around six months of the financial year remained.

RESOLVED that each Ward in the North Area Council area prioritises the efficient expenditure of the Ward Alliance Funds 2022/23, in line with the guidance on spend.

22 Notes from the Ward Alliances (Nac.12.09.2022/10)

The meeting received the notes from the Darton East Ward Alliance held on 14 June and 12 July 2022; Darton West Ward Alliance held on 27 July 2022; Old Town Ward Alliance held on 12 July 2022; and St Helen's Ward Alliance held on 30 June 2022.

Councillor Hunt provided an update regarding the work in Darton East. He remarked that there were a number of Ward Alliance Fund applications pending, and it was thought that the budget remaining within the Ward Alliance Fund may be tight. Members were made aware of summer activities held in Mapplewell Park, which had been arranged with the Community Development Officer and supported by volunteers. An average of 15-20 young people attended each session with around 50-60 at the last one held. A disco was also held at the Mapplewell Village Hall

which was well attended. Members heard that Darton East Making a Difference Awards had been arranged to take place on 30 September 2022 to recognise the contribution of groups and volunteers in the area.

Councillor T Cave spoke of the work of Darton West Ward Alliance, noting that the Ward Alliance Fund was likely to be stretched by the end of the financial year. The recent focus had been on the summer activity plan, which had taken place in different venues throughout the Ward. Thanks were given to the work of the Area Team in establishing the programme and thanks were also given to members of the Ward Alliance who volunteered. Attendance had been varied but it had been generally successful and would provide learning for future years.

Mention was made of the hanging baskets which had looked good but were only in situ for a short space of time, with the Alliance being disappointed with the service received. It was noted that the Ward Alliance had consciously started to plan early for Christmas events to ensure they were coordinated within the Ward.

Councillor Newing noted issues with hanging baskets in the Old Town Ward which had resulted in a decision to defer installation until next year, which in hindsight was the correct decision due to the exceptionally hot weather. Planning was ongoing in relation to the planting of spring bulbs and the coordination of Christmas events and siting of Christmas trees.

An update on the work in the St Helen's Ward was provided by the Mayor, Councillor Tattersall. It was noted that Ad Astra had organised training for community volunteers including first aid and food hygiene, which had received lots of interest. The seating in Smithies Recreation Ground had received funding to be repainted, and work had recently started. Members heard how discussions had taken place with Twiggs regarding the installation of the Memorial Bench and associated unveiling.

St Helen's Gala had been recently held and was well attended, and the Alliance had turned their attention towards planning of Christmas events and the siting of trees.

It was noted that St Helen's Ward had been fortunate to have the hanging baskets installed early in the season, many of which had been supported by local businesses, both in sponsoring and watering.

RESOLVED that the notes and updates from the respective Ward Alliances be noted.

Chair