

MEETING:	Dearne Area Council
DATE:	Monday 17 July 2023
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Meeting Room, Goldthorpe Library

MINUTES

Present Councillors Coates (Chair), Bellamy, Bowler, Cain and Morrell

10 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

11 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Dearne Area Council held on 22nd May 2023 (Dac.17.07.2023/2)

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 the 22nd May, 2023 be approved as a true and correct record.

12 Dearne Electronic Community Village, Rory Garforth - Verbal Update

Rory Garforth, Dearne Electronic Village Ltd, was welcomed to the meeting.

Members were updated on the Assisted Employment Project. Between April and June, there had been 29 new learners accessing support with a total of around 45 learners accessing the service over four days a week. It was noted that currently there were no sessions on Wednesday at the moment but this would change shortly. Funding had also been obtained from the Coalfields Community Investment Programme.

The Job Centre had referred the 29 new learners, 27 of whom accessed the service face to face and 2 accessed it virtually. It was also understood that further learners were likely to be referred from the DWP.

The majority of those who accessed the service were from Goldthorpe, Thurnscoe and Bolton on Dearne although other people from further away had been referred to other services as they did not live in the Dearne Area Council area.

There was a wide variety of learners from different backgrounds. Some had recently left school or were at college and were wanting help with their CV's or were wanting assistance to set themselves up on job sites. Other learners were in their 70's who were accessing the service in order to try and obtain employment because of the cost pressures due to the financial crisis and the cost of living rises. This had been rather surprising.

All learners who joined received an initial assessment on IT, Maths and English and following that an individual learning plan was put in place and qualifications were now awarded via Pearson Qualifications rather than OCR as had been the case in the past.

It was reported that since April, 21 learners had passed the IT qualification, and more were expected in the near future. Further information was provided about the guided learning hours provided for each individual student. Learners were encouraged to undertake more than the minimum 2 hours per week so that they could do an element of Job Search. The restrictions associated with Universal Credit in terms of hours assistance provided were also adhered to.

Members heard how 7 learners had gone on to find employment in a variety of industries. Arising out of this, reference was made to the fact that the DWP were pushing people into jobs they did not want or were inappropriate and this was concerning.

It was reported that 2 volunteers were currently working on a 1-1 basis with some learners although it was disappointing to learn that 'good' volunteers were often lost as they obtained employment.

The only remaining issue related to the rent, an issue that had been ongoing for some time. The Area Council Manager reported that this matter had now been escalated and it was hoped that this matter would finally be addressed in the near future. Arising out of this discussion, reference was made to the vermin infestation of the building that had now been sorted.

Reference was also made to the current position with regard to Trustees and it was noted that 2 additional Trustees had recently been appointed

In relation to funding, it was noted that the project was now at the end of the first quarter of the second year and thanks were extended to both the Council and the Area Council for their continued support. Information was also provided about applications made to other funding pots and to other funding opportunities that might be available. Rory stated that he would investigate these opportunities further.

RESOLVED that thanks be given for the presentation and update and that Rory be thanked for all his hard work.

13 Housing and Cohesion Officer, Kev Frisby - Verbal Update

Kev Frisby, Housing and Cohesion Officer joined remotely and was welcomed to the meeting.

He outlined the work in which he had been involved over the last quarter. He had spent a great deal of time working in Elizabeth Street in Goldthorpe. Eleven Notices had been issued and of the 31 houses, there were currently 12 vacant and a number were for sale. He had undertaken a visit last Thursday with Paul Brannan (Head of Safer Barnsley) together with representatives of the NHS and with Councillors. It was hoped that improvements would be made shortly as an indication had been received that some of the houses were to be bought.

He had also spent time in Thurnscoe and Bolton on Dearne but Goldthorpe had taken most of his time. He was continuing to work with schools and with safeguarding leads who were undertaking Early Needs Assessments as required. He was also hoping that as a result of this work, landlord issues could be identified and dealt with. This work would continue once schools re-opened in September. If anyone had any issues or concerns in this respect, they should raise them with him direct.

He had tried to undertake work within Family Centres, but this had not been successful largely because parents just wished to drop their children off and pick them up as quickly as possible. It may be appropriate, therefore, to look at alternative times for undertaking such work.

Questions were raised about the plans for Frederick Street. Arising out of this Kev stated that he had received a complaint but not been aware of how bad things had become. He was dealing with a backlog of work and had delivered a letter to tenants and to owner occupiers. This afternoon he was to write to the owners of the tenanted properties asking them to contact their tenants. He also reported that 5 gardens had been in a shocking state and the tenants/owners had been given 14 days to have the necessary works undertaken to tidy them up.

Members were then given a brief update of the additional money obtained and the uses to which this was put. Kev reported that he had £3,000 which, at his discretion, he could use for vulnerable families for various issues and particularly in relation to hygiene concerns. He was looking to develop this work further, but money had to be used sparingly.

Arising out of the discussion, reference was made to the work of the Renaissance Centre, to Key Worker referrals and to the way in which duplication of referrals could be avoided, It was noted that many people who were out of work as well as some who were in work were struggling at the moment because of the cost of living crisis.

Kev also reported that, for personal reasons, from 1st January, 2024 he would only be working four days per week. The Area Council Manager was currently discussing the future funding arrangements.

RESOLVED that thanks be given for the presentation and update and that Kev be thanked for all his hard work.

14 Dearne Area Council Finance Update (Dac.17.07.2023/5)

The Area Council Manager submitted a report providing an update regarding the Area Council's financial position.

The report outlined the spend for 2022/23, the committed spend for 2023/24 and for 2024/25 together with information about the Dearne Development Fund and a detailed financial breakdown was included within an Appendix to the report.

It was noted that in total the Area Council had £62,929.91 to carry over into this financial year.

The Area Council Manager reminded Member that in relation to expenditure for 2024/25, there was currently no provision at the moment for environmental and young people's initiatives and that a workshop to discuss these issues was planned for Monday 24th March, 2023 in Westgate Plaza Barnsley

RESOVED that the Financial update and the impact on future budgets be noted.

15 Notes from the Dearne Ward Alliances (Dac.17.07.2023/6)

The meeting received the notes from the Dearne North Ward Alliance held on 2nd May and 20th June, 2023 and Dearne South Ward Alliance held on 6th June, 2023.

Members then received a brief update from the respective Chair's of the main items discussed and the activities promoted:

(a) Dearne North

- New councillors had been welcomed to their first meeting
- Applications for support had been limited to a maximum of £1,000 and to one application per year in order to ensure an equitable spread of resources. Four applications for funding had been approved. Organisations that were wanting more than £1,000 were also given advice about seeking funding from alternative sources
- Updates had been provided on the services that B:friend were commissioned to run
- A new secretary had been appointed to the Ward Alliance

(b) Dearne South

- Two applications for funding had been approved
- The treasurer had given an update of the financial position to date
- An update was provided of the summer activities being promoted
- An update had been provided in respect of the various groups
- There had been a discussion about possible future programmes/activities

RESOLVED that notes from the respective Ward Alliances and the updates now provided be received.

16 Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds (Dac.17.07.2023/7)

The Area Council Manager submitted a report on the spend to date (excluding the spend from the most recent Ward Alliance Meetings) from the Ward Alliance Funds within the Dearne North and South Area.

It was noted that with the Dearne Ward there was a starting balance for 2023/24 of £12,270.17 which included an underspend of £2,270.17 from 2022/23. Eight projects had been funded at a cost of £7,365.99 leaving a balance of £4,904.18. Within Dearne South there had been a starting balance for 2023/24 of £16,031.04 which included an underspend of £6,031.04 from 2022/23. Four projects had been funded at a cost of £5,946.07 leaving a balance of £10,084.97.

It was noted that further projects had been funded since the report had been prepared and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Arising out of the discussion, the Area Council Manager reported that the Environmental Survey was due to close shortly and any Members wishing to submit their views should do so as soon as possible. She would send the link to the survey out again for ease of reference. The results of the survey would be fed into the Workshop meeting scheduled for the 24th July, 2023.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Ward Alliance Fund Report, excluding the expenditure from the most recent Ward Alliance Meetings, detailing the expenditure for the Dearne North and South Wards together with the funding available for the remainder of the 2023/24 financial year be noted; and
- (ii) That Members be requested to complete and return the Environmental Survey as a matter of urgency.

Chair