

MEETING:	Penistone Area Council
DATE:	Thursday, 23 July 2020
TIME:	10.30 am
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

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

44 **Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests**

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

45 **Minutes of the Penistone Area Council meeting held on 4th June, 2020 (Pac.23.07.2020/2)**

The Area Council received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4th June, 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Penistone Area Council meeting held on the 4th June, 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

46 **Notes from the Penistone Ward Alliance held on 13th February, 2020 (Pac.23.07.2020/3)**

The meeting received the notes from the Penistone East and West Ward Alliance held on 13th February, 2020.

Members noted that due to the current situation the Ward Alliance had not spent the allocated funds for events that were due to take place. It was suggested that a Ward Alliance meeting be held to discuss the future spend of those allocated funds.

RESOLVED that the notes from the Penistone East and West Ward Alliance held on 13th February, 2020 be received.

47 **Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds (Pac.23.07.2020/4)**

The Area Council Manager provided members with an update on the allocation, spending and outstanding finance within the Ward Alliance Funds. From a total balance of £36,970.05, £35,692.65 remained to be allocated.

Members expressed some concern that only 2 applications had been received, possibly due to the interpretation of the rigidity surrounding the Covid-19 criteria. The Area Council Manager informed members that although the report mentioned match funding requirements, due to the current situation this had been relaxed so any new applications received would not necessarily require it.

It was noted that a virtual Ward Alliance meeting was in the process of being arranged to discuss these issues.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

48 Procurement and Financial Update (Pac.23.07.2020/6)

The Area Council Manager introduced the item referring to services provided by the Supporting Vulnerable and Isolated Older People Services, the Working Together Fund and the Clean and Tidy Service.

Members were informed that Age UK were due to give a full review of the Supporting Vulnerable and Isolated Older People Services to the Penistone Area Council on 4th June 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic this was unable to take place. Members agreed to hold a Workshop to receive this update by Age UK before the next Penistone Area Council due to be held on 1st October, 2020.

Members received an update on the Working Together Fund informing them that the balance of £61,030 still remained as the proposed Workshop to be held in March 2020 to discuss utilising this fund to support young people was unable to meet and that no further applications had been received for this grant to date. Members were informed that the South Pennine Bus Service had finished receiving contracting arrangements at the end of June 2020, although a short extension was granted to carry forward services during the lockdown. Funds to support CAB debt advice service were due to cease at the end of September 2020. The Area Council Manager proposed members may wish to look at the Area Council Priorities and how to use these funds differently from the outcomes of the lockdown.

Members were informed that the new Clean, Green and Tidy Contract commenced during lockdown on 1st April, 2020 by Twiggs Grounds Maintenance Ltd. The Quarter 4 performance report demonstrated satisfactory overall performance. Members noted that the current contract had been flexed to meet the immediate needs during the Covid-19 lockdown period and it is performing as expected during the circumstances.

The Area Council Manager gave an update on the funds available to Ward Alliances, at the start of the 2020/21 financial year £36,970.05 was available to spend against the immediate needs to support the community, only 2 applications had been received so far at a total spend of £1277.40 leaving £35,962.65 to spend against the Ward Alliances Covid-19 priorities.

Following the 4th June meeting recommending that Area Councils review their priorities following the crisis, it was recommended that members hold workshops to discuss how to align the Area Council priorities in aiding the recovery of the Borough and future spending implications.

At the meeting held on 13th February, 2020 members considered the continued use of the Penistone Living magazine with a view to making a decision at the planned meeting on 9th April which was cancelled. Members felt it was important to continue using the magazine as a way of keeping the lines of communication open with residents. Members received an update informing them Barnsley Chronicle had yet to reinstate the Penistone Living supplement which had been put on hold due to the

Covid-19 crisis, this was to be monitored and investigated further and an update would be given to the Area Council at a future meeting.

An overview of the financial situation was given, with £163,225 remaining for distribution in 2020/21 including a cumulative underspend identified from previous years' budgets.

Members discussed, due to the considerable remaining budget, whether following the outcome of the workshop around priorities it would be possible to set up a specific response fund in order to meet identified Covid-19 recovery priorities. The Area Council Manager confirmed that it would be possible to set this up with a small Sub Group to determine criteria and how applications would be judged and act as Panel to oversee applications coming in.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the update on procurement activity be received;
- (ii) that a Workshop be held before the 1st October Area Council Meeting to receive an update from Age UK;
- (iii) that members hold a Workshop to consider Penistone Area Council's priorities and future likely spending implications;
- (iv) that support be given to future features in Penistone Living, with a report to be considered by a future meeting of the Area Council; and
- (v) that the current financial position be noted.

49 Performance Report (Pac.23.07.2020/5)

The Area Council Manager introduced the Quarter 4 performance report which included the start of the lockdown period and would be the final report showing the outcomes set as part of the contract with each provider. Members were informed that contracts were unable to be adhered to in the lockdown period so they weren't able to be monitored against set criteria, the report highlighted the changes made to these flexed contractual arrangements.

Members were informed that under the Environment priority no particular issues or concerns had arisen and the provider was still achieving outcomes from activities with businesses and young people involved in such things as design of local environment. Under the Economy priority local spend was still quite high at 90%. The number of volunteer hours was also high with an additional 112 volunteer opportunities being created. It was noted that no new full time employment positions had been created due to there being no new contracts. Members were highlighted to the fact that the Community Car Share Scheme showed particularly high numbers, this was due to Dial A Ride now including journeys that had not previously been recorded. The support to young people was highlighted as needing to encourage new contracts as there were low numbers of young people in volunteering and activities for the under 18s.

The Area Council Manager provided Members with a presentation outlining the COVID-19 recovery planning and outcomes of the impact of the lockdown.

Members were informed of the exceptional community response to the pandemic with 9 networks established plus several smaller groups within the first 3 weeks of the lockdown via groups and parishes. The Area Team had created a good relationship with parishes and had offered support and resources to aid these groups including providing Love Thy Penistone with card readers for shopping trips. Major supermarkets and local suppliers had contributed food donations and Huskar Helping Hands had set up a Just Giving Page to support the community. The larger established groups such as Love Thy Penistone and the Huskar Helping Hands had been able to develop databases, volunteer tracker apps and volunteer protocols for training future volunteers in order to keep them safe. In meeting with these groups a number of issues of concern had been identified in the community such as social isolation, individuals living with financial hardship and mental health issues across all age ranges plus a number of other issues. It was noted that some volunteers had built up relationships in the community and were continuing to link up with people they had befriended. Whilst being proactive out in the Community it had enabled the volunteers to engage with people who may have been too proud to ask for help but who needed it.

Members were informed that Age UK continued to maintain links with community organisations and individuals by providing 417 interventions, engaging 94 older people and utilising 39 volunteers during the Covid-19 lockdown period and taking on 32 new referrals of the most vulnerable members of the community. Moving forward Age UK planned to utilise digital technology such as Zoom and Skype to run some virtual activities for those able to partake. They intended to hold socially distanced chair-based Tai Chi groups, address the increased risk of falls due to reduced mobility resulting from the lockdown and additional mental health support to service users. There was a hope to resume the Men in Sheds sessions once St Andrews Church re-opens.

Members heard how Twiggs had been asked to support BMBC neighbourhood services by providing targeted clean ups and litter picks during the lockdown period and how they had been innovative in maintaining contact with businesses and volunteers providing support to groups by socially distanced meets and holding virtual training to aid volunteers to maintain areas they had taken responsibility for. Moving forward it was noted that Twiggs were continuing to support these volunteers and that the work with Neighbourhood Services would likely cease towards the end of the month. It was reflected that the Area Team had received feedback from the community appreciative of the work carried out and it was noted that there had been an upsurge in new volunteers coming forward resulting in plans to possibly provide equipment for community volunteers to use for the purpose of community work.

Members were informed that Dial advice and information services had fluctuating demands during the period with 126 clients accessing the service compared to 63 last quarter resulting in new volunteer support providing the additional offer of the safe and well checks to known clients. Feedback had revealed that the calls had helped reveal an increase in loneliness and isolation but that the calls had helped alleviate this to some degree.

The CAB service was similar to the Dial service in that it suspended its face to face contact from 24th March and offered support through the advice line and virtual services. Members were informed that on average there were 17 client contacts per quarter, this rose to 51 in this period resulting in the need to provide additional resources by working 5 days in comparison to their contracted 2 half days per month funded by CAB themselves and consequently not maintainable. The Area Council Manager made members aware that this contract ceases at the end of September 2020. There was growing evidence that many people had not yet dealt with their resulting debt from the pandemic and this would likely come to light as organisations started to unlock and recover their debts and bailiffs offices and courts start to open. There had also been an increase in employment advice issues with people asking for advice in relation to claiming benefits for the first time and a predicted increase when the furlough period comes to an end. It was suggested that members may wish to look at this contract as a priority spend.

Members received an update on the South Pennine Bus Transport contract which had officially ended but an emergency extension was granted to the 30th June. It was reported that it had been a lifeline for vulnerable people who felt safer travelling on smaller buses and that it had been utilised so drivers were able to deliver supplies to those shielding. During the lockdown South Pennine had assisted in food bank deliveries and that any surplus food had been offered to passengers. Members were informed that the South Pennine Service was likely to provide a role in the recovery process for the Penistone Area contributing in aiding the elderly and vulnerable to leave their homes and that the number 25 Service would continue as long as it was able to but that no grant requests had been received to date.

Members were provided with an update to the impact on the other Area Council Priorities arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the next steps for consideration by members. Support to the Local Economy through Principal Town funds was still ongoing for Penistone, and several initiatives have been offered from the main BMBC services in support of business and members will need to consider this when looking at local priorities. Support for young people had been available but this was an area for future consideration by members as part of the review of priorities.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that a workshop be organised for Age UK, Dial and CAB to provide presentations to discuss outcomes of their provision and services leading into discussions surrounding the new priorities for spending to assist in the recovery process in the area as soon as possible; and
- (ii) that a workshop be organised to provide greater detail on business and economy support as soon as possible.

50 Close of Meeting

The Chair declared the meeting closed.

Chair