

MEETING:	Dearne Area Council
DATE:	Monday, 18 January 2021
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Noble (Chair), Danforth, Gardiner, Gollick, C. Johnson and Phillips

9 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

10 Minutes from the Previous Meeting held on 16th November, 2020 (Dac.18.01.2021/2)

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Dearne Area Council meeting held on the 16th November, 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

11 Bfriend social connectivity service - Mike Niles (Dac.18.01.2021/3)

Mike Niles representing the Bfriend Social Connectivity Service attended the meeting and gave Members an update of work currently being undertaken within the area.

He explained the background to the Service which operated with the Dearne and other areas of South Yorkshire and which aimed to reduce social isolation. As a result of the Covid pandemic the Bfriend had been required to 'revamp' its services by transferring all its Bfriending/face to face activity online or telephone (for those who did not have access to the internet). Because of the exceptionally good volunteer base it had been possible to deliver to service users' essential items such as food and medicines and this had been particularly important at the start of the pandemic.

Weekly telephone calls were made with the two groups in the Dearne, one in Bolton upon Dearne and the other in Thurnscoe and Facebook live sessions were utilised to deliver various activities. Bundles/packs of activity related material were also delivered to try to ensure such residents still felt connected even though they were unable to access any of the online sessions.

Since March the Service had supported over 80 older neighbours in the Dearne and delivered between 180-200 packs to those who were self-isolating. It was pleasing to note, however, that as the Service had been running prior to the first lockdown this had enabled it to know where to target resources, to be connected, to be a trusted friend and to make the necessary connections for 'clients' to other services within the area.

This year there had been an independent qualitative evaluation of the project with both beneficiaries and volunteers. The main findings, amongst other things, indicated that the Service had used volunteers within the area who had never previously volunteered and the Service had contributed to improved well-being. The report findings were quite extensive, and a copy was available should members wish to have sight of it. The findings were extremely positive and outlined the importance of the Service to residents particularly during the difficult circumstances currently pertaining.

In conclusion he stated that whilst much of what the service undertook had changed as a result of the pandemic, it had, at the same time, highlighted the importance of the work undertaken in reducing social isolation particularly amongst the vulnerable community.

In response to questioning Mr Niles commented on the following:

- Since the lockdown started there had been an uptake in the number of referrals and there had been an approximate four-fold increase in demand. The people Bfriend was working with were facing increased anxiety and this too had increased the staff time required too try to connect people to statutory services or other community 'offers'
- Reference was also made to the way in which residents accessing the service had responded to the lack of face to face contact. Those who had access to a Bfriend prior to lockdown had probably coped better than those who had attended social group sessions as the latter group were facing isolation/restrictions in a way they had previously not experienced. Some of the relationships formed had been crucial and people were looking forward to the re-establishment of face to face sessions when this was possible
- Anyone over the age of 65 living on their own could access the service and referrals were still being accepted. The service was exceptionally lucky in that volunteers were still signing up to offer support. If Members of the Area Council knew of anyone who needed support, they were encouraged to refer them to the Service

RESOLVED that Mike Niles be thanked for his report, for attending the meeting and for answering Members questions.

12 COVID-19 Public Health update - Craig Aubrey and Cath Bedford/Lucy Butcher (Dac.18.01.2021/4)

Cath Bedford, Public Health Principal – Communities and Craig Aubrey, Neighbourhood Engagement Officer were welcomed to the meeting.

Members were reminded of the national lockdown which commenced on 5th January, 2021 and it was noted that the rate of infection was steadily but persistently rising with around 100 new cases per day across the borough but it was hoped that this would reduce as a result of the current lockdown. Rises were generally seen in the working age population, especially in those aged 50-59 and 20-39. The public health message of 'Hands, Face, Space' remained and Members were also reminded of the need to open windows for fresh air particularly during the winter months.

Members heard that situation report meetings were held twice a week to consider data, and it was noted that cases seemed distributed across the borough. Members were encouraged to feed in any intelligence which may result in understanding any patterns.

16 Covid Marshals had been employed and though they had no formal powers of enforcement, they worked closely with Police and Regulatory Service staff who did. Their recent observations included lack of face coverings being worn, poor social distancing, and a lack of signage in commercial premises. Also noted were recurrent gatherings of young people in outdoor public places.

Those present heard how six Neighbourhood Engagement Officers were now in post. One was assigned to each Area Council. Members also heard about the community insights work, with workshops being organised to understand behaviour in relation to Covid. A Workshop had also been organised for Elected Members on the 2nd February, 2021. Additional finance had been secured to support engagement with disabled and BAME communities.

Members noted the work to support vulnerable communities impacted by Covid, and to understand and support the management of any outbreaks.

Members heard about the Covid Support Service in place to support the national test and trace efforts, with welfare telephone calls being made and even house visits for those unable to be reached.

Details of the Community Testing Centre at the Metrodome were provided. Symptomatic testing was being provided at three sites throughout the borough. In addition, a mobile testing unit was available which this week would be at the Cinema car park in Penistone. A pilot had opened recently focusing on the routine testing of critical frontline workers.

It was acknowledged that routine testing would also be undertaken in secondary schools, but further detail on this was outstanding.

Vaccinations had commenced with sites at Priory Campus, Apollo Court and Goldthorpe Medical Centre. Members were asked to encourage residents to wait to be called for their vaccine rather than making enquiries.

Craig Aubrey, then provided details about the role of Neighbourhood Engagement Officers and the work they were currently undertaking. They supported compliance in businesses, and referred any issues for enforcement where necessary, working closely with Covid Marshals, Response Co-ordinator and Community Responders. The role also included raising awareness of financial support to businesses in the area. Work was also undertaken with the community to identify and tackle issues that arose in relation to non-compliance with the Covid guidance.

Members were asked to report any breaches of Covid guidance which would provide useful intelligence for all agencies supporting this effort.

In response to questions it was explained how the Neighbourhood Engagement Officers and Covid Marshalls worked alongside Community Safety Officers and the Police to share intelligence information and ensure a seamless approach particularly

in relation to investigations and actions in respect of breaches of Covid guidance. Cath Bedford also reported on joint visits that had been organised involving Covid Marshalls and the South Yorkshire Police.

It was recognised that Covid Marshalls did not have powers of enforcement and any fines had to be issued by the Police, but they also worked closely with Regulatory Service to try to ensure appropriate compliance. It was pleasing to note, however, that the majority of residents/businesses accepted the advice issued.

Further information on the rationale for the placement of the Mobile Testing Unit would be provided but it was thought that decisions about this were largely based on identified need/hot spots.

The Chair commented that an issue that she had raised with the Neighbourhood Engagement Officer had been dealt with quickly and efficiently and the problem had not occurred again and thanks were extended to the Team for that.

RESOLVED that Cath Bedford and Craig Aubrey be thanked for attending the meeting, presenting the report and answering Members questions.

13 Finance Update Report (Dac.18.01.2021/5)

Claire Dawson, Dearne Area Council Manager spoke to the report previously circulated.

An overview of the financial position was provided. The Area Council had an opening budget of £214,720.67, which, as previously reported, was supplemented by an additional £10,000 from the hardship fund. Members had approved the Education, Environment and Volunteer Service, Housing and Migration Officer, Employability Service and Social Connectivity Service, together with an allocation of £28,000 to the Dearne Development Fund.

It was noted that £173.67 remained unallocated, however, income from NESTA to support the Social Connectivity Service had been received leaving a total of £9,663.67 unallocated.

Following the allocation of £28,000 to the Dearne Development Fund, together with £10,000 from the hardship fund, and finance carried forward from 2019/20, £41,650.68 was available to distribute. Members noted that awards had been given to DIAL, CAB, Thurnscoe Community Plaza and Highgate Outdoor Improvement Scheme and that £11,427.68 remained in the fund.

In relation to the remaining funding in the Dearne Development Fund it was noted that funding bids had to include a Covid related element in order to be eligible. It was hoped that any remaining budget not spent could be carried over into the next financial year given the exceptional circumstances.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

14 Procurement Report - Environmental, Education and Volunteering service (Dac.18.01.2021/6)

Claire Dawson, Dearne Area Council Manager spoke to the report previously circulated which sought to delegate to the Executive Director Adults and Communities responsibility to make changes to the current activities/targets of the environmental, Education and volunteer Service currently delivered by Twigg's Grounds Maintenance.

Members were reminded that at the meeting held on the 16th November, 2020 the Area Council had agreed a third-year extension of the environmental, education and volunteer contract with an option to extend for a further year thereafter. It was noted, however, that the restrictions posed by the Covid pandemic had posed difficulties for Twigg's in working with volunteers, groups, businesses and schools.

On the 14th December, 2020, Members together with the Area Manager and representatives of the procurement team had met to discuss activities and targets set for Twigg's at the start of their contract, to review those targets in the light of the pandemic and to discuss a possible variation to the contract in view of the difficulties encountered. As a result of that meeting, alternative activities and targets had been suggested with others being put on hold for the next 12 months and details of the proposals were outlined within the report.

It was noted that in the past, Twigg's had adopted an approach of working with groups and organisations (in addition to proactive and reactive work) but due to the current pandemic situation it was suggested that there would have to be much more emphasis on the reactive and proactive elements of the contract whilst, at the same time, working with volunteers and groups that were able to do so, accepting that this kind of work would be restricted. It was proposed, therefore, that a schedule would be developed for the Service to work towards for the next 12 months

The next steps in the process would be to work through the activities and targets with the provider and with the procurement team in order to develop a work schedule and a variation to the original contract. Members of the Area Council together with the Area Team and partners would continue to work to build up a schedule of activity based around reactive work. It was anticipated that this schedule would be available in early February in time for the start of the new financial year. The Service would proactively target areas that were not already within the schedule and the Area Manager would hold discussions with Neighbourhood Services to ensure that there was no duplication of work/work areas.

Arising out of the discussion, reference was made to the work currently undertaken within the area by the Shaw Foundation in association with other organisations including the Thurnscoe Tenants Association. Particular reference was made to the difficulties that were encountered when litter was picked up on private land and for which the Council had no responsibility to remove/collect. The Area Council Manager stated that she would circulate a link which could be shared with the Tenants Association which gave details of land ownership within the area. It was important, however, to ensure that there was no duplication of effort and that work was co-ordinated across the area. The Area Council Manager stressed that she would be contacting Neighbourhood Services as a matter of urgency as it was important to ensure that service worked collaboratively in order to gain maximum benefit for the residents in the area. It was also suggested that the Area Council Link Officer may be able to assist in obtaining detailed information on service provision.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report be received and that the proposed changes to the current service activities and targets be noted; and
- (ii) That following the outcome of further discussions and the development of a schedule of work, as now reported, the Executive Director Adults and Communities be authorised to implement the changes proposed by way of a variation to the contract with Twigg's Grounds Maintenance.

15 Notes from the Ward Alliances (Dac.18.01.2021/7)

Members received the notes of Dearne South Ward Alliance held on 19th November, 2020. The Ward Alliance had approved a grant of £1,000 to update the resilience container with more emergency equipment to ensure that any residents in Dearne South could access grit or flood materials in an emergency. Alan George, who was a keyholder and had access to the items 24/7 and who was also a key flood warden for Bolton on Dearne also gave a full treasurers report. It was also noted that the Defibrillator was now installed in Goldthorpe.

Winter Warmer packs had been issued to the District Nurse Team and would be given out to the most vulnerable elderly in the area in conjunction with the Public Health Team.

The meeting received the notes from the Dearne North Ward Alliance held on 3rd December, 2020 which had taken the form of an informal meeting. New Members of staff had been introduced and an update had been given by Amy Calvert from the Barnsley Food Network on her role and how she could help communities deliver projects around food storage and help Fareshare in future projects in 2021.

RESOLVED that the notes from the respective Ward Alliances be received.

16 Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds (Dac.18.01.2021/8)

Claire Dawson, Dearne Area Council Manager, provided an update in relation to the Ward Alliance Funds for Dearne North and Dearne South wards.

Members noted that Dearne North had a balance of £12,247.12 at the start of the financial year, which included an underspend of £247.12 from the 2019/20 budget, £10,000 Ward Alliance monies for 2020/21 and £2,000 Covid support funds. To date funds had been provided for 9 projects at a cost of £12,064.20 leaving a balance of £182.92.

Dearne South Ward Alliance had a balance for 2020/21 of £16,605.12, which included an underspend of £4,605.12 from the 2019/20 budget, £10,000 Ward Alliance monies and £2,000 Covid support funds. To date support had provided funds for 9 projects at a cost of £13,901.40 leaving a balance of £2,703.72.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

17 Community Safety in the Dearne - Fiona Tennyson (Dac.18.01.2021/9)

Fiona Tennyson, Community Safety Team Leader, was welcomed to the meeting to discuss issues in the area.

Reference was made to the difficulties caused by the Covid pandemic and of not being able to meet collectively as a team within the Police Station.

The Private Sector Housing and Cohesion Officer had undertaken around 150 proactive jobs this quarter largely concentrating on Waste and Fly Tipping and Contaminated Bins. He had also concentrated on the Victoria Street Area alongside the Environmental Task Force. The Housing Enforcement Officer, who also covered Hoyland and Wombwell, had undertaken 50+ jobs within the Dearne Area and, in addition, working alongside the Salvation Army had ensured that food packages were delivered. Both officers had been extremely busy undertaking environmental as well as supportive work.

The Victim and Witness Support Officer had been involved in 9 cases across the Dearne and the Community Safety Officer had reported on 23 fly tips and 9 abandoned vehicles spread evenly across Bolton, Goldthorpe and Thurnscoe.

Environmental work had also been undertaken in Elizabeth Street, Goldthorpe.

Issues in relation to Anti Social Behaviour had taken considerable resources. Work had been undertaken in association with the Police particularly within the Stotfold Drive area of Goldthorpe and the Low Grange Road area in Thurnscoe. In addition, a number of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts had been issued as well as 2 pre-injunction warning letters. Preparations were also being made for the issuing of injunctions if required.

RESOLVED that the feedback and report be noted.

Chair