

MEETING:	Dearne Area Council
DATE:	Monday, 15 March 2021
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

Present Councillors Noble (Chair), Danforth, Gollick and Phillips.

18 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

19 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Dearne Area Council held on 18th January, 2021 (Dac.15.03.2021/2)

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 18th January, 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

20 Superfast South Yorkshire - Julie Tattershall (Dac.15.03.2021/3)

Julie Tattershall was welcomed to the meeting to provide an update on Superfast South Yorkshire (SFSY) and Accelerating Digital Barnsley.

Members heard how SFSY was a partnership between the four South Yorkshire local authorities, Building Digital UK, Openreach and the Local Enterprise Partnership. So far SFSY had increased availability of superfast broadband from 80% to over 98% bringing nearly 120,000 new connections. In addition, support had been provided to SMEs on how to gain the benefits of connectivity and advice relating to infrastructure had also been provided to developers and to planning departments.

Members noted the current activity being undertaken, including working with Openreach to provide fibre to the premises for 8,000 homes, inputting into digital strategies in Barnsley and the City Region and also being consulted on digital connectivity as part of the planning process.

Noted was the work undertaken in the Dearne Area with a total of 2,695 properties now having improved connectivity due to Phase 1, and a further 167 in phase 2. Also noted were plans for Openreach to improve the exchange in Goldthorpe, for City Fibre to invest in infrastructure in the area, and that Virgin Media were also looking to upgrade their infrastructure.

Those present heard of the work of Accelerate Digital Barnsley. This included efforts to increase gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure from commercial providers such as City Fibre, to stimulate demand through voucher schemes, and to ensure all new

residential and commercial sites were future proofed with gigabit capable infrastructure.

Members also were made aware of Internet of Things (IoT) work to utilise technology in smart ways, collecting data to be used for strategic decision making. Examples of temperature sensors being used to help decide when to deploy gritters was given and parking sensors to monitor occupancy and dwell time to inform the parking strategy.

It was noted that officers also worked with network providers to plan the installation of 5G provision over the next two years.

Members acknowledged the strategic linkages being made and social value opportunities created. The work to address digital exclusion was also acknowledged, with 1,400 laptops already distributed, and more donated devices to give to those requiring one.

Members discussed the availability of data relating to the use of 4G and 5G at an area level, and it was noted that most data was commercially sensitive and therefore not available. However, it was understood that Sheffield City Region was considering purchasing more detailed data and therefore this may be available in the future.

RESOLVED that thanks be given for the presentation, and that its content be noted.

21 Dearne Electronic Community Village (Dac.15.03.2021/4)

Rory Garforth was welcomed to the meeting to discuss the work undertaken to assist residents improve their employability and IT skills. The programme ran three days a week and was in the second year of a three-year contract.

Members noted that there had been 63 learners in the current year, which was a reduction from previous years due to the impact of the pandemic and the cessation of learning in person. It was expected that face-to-face teaching would resume when restrictions allowed. Members heard that there had been an increase in referrals from the Department for Work and Pensions over the past few weeks.

58 learners had achieved a qualification, with support being provided remotely through such as Zoom and through telephone calls. Approximately half of the available time was used to support people return to work. During the past year 12 people had been supported in to full time employment, with two into part time employment.

Members heard of the types of support given. Initial assessment to gauge levels in English and maths was undertaken, and referrals made where relevant. Support provided then focused on basic computer skills, such as using Microsoft Office. Assistance was also given with job search, applications, writing CVs, and ensuring job journals were kept up to date.

Support was also provided on interview techniques, engaging with council services online, and using internet banking.

Those present heard of the additional work undertaken to reduce digital exclusion. A Silver Surfer course had previously been undertaken, and learners had been contacted to offer support.

It was noted that volunteers had been unable to offer support recently due to the pandemic, but it was hoped that this could be rectified when restrictions were lifted.

Members discussed the impact of the project and thanks were given for all the hard work undertaken. Noted was the Council's Employer Supported Volunteering scheme, and it was suggested that some employees may wish to volunteer at the centre when restrictions allow.

RESOLVED that thanks be given for the update and for all the hard work undertaken.

22 Twiggs Grounds Maintenance (Dac.15.03.2021/5)

Wendy Twigg and Nigel Roberts were welcomed to the meeting. Members were reminded that restrictions had meant that the team were unable to work with groups of volunteers, but 15 volunteer bubbles had been supported in the area, with 27 adults and two children involved. These bubbles had collected over 200 sacks of litter in the area. Members were encouraged to forward any details of community members who collected litter independently, in order that support could be offered.

Members were made aware that the tool bank was now operational, with tools and equipment for volunteers to borrow.

The recent variation to contract had focused the work of the team in a number of areas, and all had been visited and improved.

Contact had been made with a number of existing environmental groups in the area, with a view to restarting group activities when restrictions allowed.

Members heard that Twiggs had recently recruited a number of apprentices, which would be given the opportunity to experience working in the area.

The issue of fly-tipping was discussed and the increase in prevalence during the pandemic was noted. It was noted that the Council would be reinvigorating the approach to tackling this.

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

23 Covid-19 Update - Cath Bedford and Craig Aubrey (Dac.15.03.2021/6)

Cath Bedford and Craig Aubrey were welcomed to the meeting. Members were aware that case rates were declining in the area, but slowly, and that the message of 'Hands, Face, Space' needed to be maintained.

The vaccination programme continued to be successfully delivered, with 77,000 adults in Barnsley now vaccinated. As the programme moves to target younger residents, an increase in vaccine hesitancy was expected.

The Neighbourhood Engagement Officer had been working locally, providing a contact for local businesses, including licensed premises, to receive advice on applying for funding and reopening in a Covid safe way when allowed. Members also noted the work to support reopening of community buildings.

Work had been undertaken with Regulatory Services to visit supermarkets and minimarkets in the area to provide guidance and support in relation to the current restrictions.

Members noted the work with volunteers to distribute reusable face masks, with 200 already handed out and a further 300 available.

Noted was the work with Covid Marshals to visit local beauty spots to ensure compliance, and it was acknowledged that this was intelligence led.

Members noted that Craig had secured permanent employment as a Community Development Officer with the Central Team. All wished him well and thanked him for his work in the area.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

24 Update on Commissions (Dac.15.03.2021/7)

The Area Council Manager provided an update on the current position of services funded by the Area Council.

The Housing and Migration Officer was 14 months into a two-year contract and continued to work proactively. Members heard that waste on premises, fly-tipping and contaminated bins continued to provide a focus. Members raised questions around persistent issues, and it was suggested that these be escalated, with enforcement action taken where necessary.

B:Friend were eight months into the first year of a two year contract and continued to be busy, providing support online and via telephone. The service had seen an increase in referrals and numbers of volunteers applying to assist.

Those present were made aware that the second year of the Employability Service provided by DECV was due to end in March, 2021. Though the service continued to provide support; as this was undertaken remotely there had been a reduction in numbers accessing the service.

The contract with Twiggs Grounds Maintenance had been granted on a two-year basis, with the option to extend the contract for two further periods of 12 months. Members were reminded that the first two-year period would come to an end in March, 2021, but that a decision had already been made to extend this at a previous meeting of the Area Council. A schedule for the service had been completed, and it was noted that this was subject to amendment as the need arose.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

25 Dearne Area Council Financial Update (Dac.15.03.2021/8)

The Area Council Manager made Members aware that the Area Council had an opening balance for 2020/21 of £214,720.67. Following funding the Education, Environment and Volunteer Service; Housing and Migration Officer; Social Connectivity Service; Employability Service; and distributing funds to the Dearne Development Fund, £163.67 remained for allocation. However, it was noted that income from NESTA had been received and therefore taking this into account £9,663.67 remained.

The opening balance for 2021/22 was therefore £209,663.67. £145,000 had already been committed, resulting in £64,663.67 remaining for allocation.

With regards to the Dearne Development Fund, £28,000 had been allocated from the Area Council, £10,000 had been received from the hardship fund and there had been £3,650.68 to carry forward. Following the distribution of funds to CAB, Thurnscoe Community Plaza, DIAL and Highgate Outdoor Improvement £11,427.68 remained within the fund.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

26 Performance Report Q3 (Dac.15.03.2021/9)

The Area Council Manager introduced the item referring to the report circulated, which had been produced in a revised format.

Members were reminded of the currently funded services and which Area Council priority these contributed towards.

During quarter three, October to December 2020, Twiggs Grounds Maintenance had supported 50 community groups and businesses, worked with 26 volunteers, encouraged 19 new volunteers, and collected 149 bags of rubbish.

The B:Friend service had continued to support residents, including 73 older neighbours isolating. There had been 468 volunteer hours pledged to befriend others. 83 hours of staff time had been used for calls and visits, and the service had distributed 44 Bundles of Joy packs. It was noted that 11 new referrals had been received

Dearne Electronic Community Village had supported 61 learners in the quarter, with 18 of these being new learners. 28 learners had achieved a qualification, with 4 of these going into employment and 18 into further training.

Members heard how the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Officer had received 120 reports, and their work had contributed to 42 properties being improved. 33 residents had been helped make positive changes, with 42 houses supported to responsibly recycle or dispose of waste The officer had also reported 43 incidences of fly tipping.

In relation to the service provided by Citizen's Advice Bureau, 36 people with 74 issues had been supported within the quarter. This had resulted in an additional £37,580 of benefit being claimed and £18,000 of debt being managed.

DIAL had received 214 enquiries within the quarter, with 300 people reporting reduced anxiety as a result of the support provided by the service. £199,770.36 of additional benefit claims had also been supported.

Members received feedback from the service delivered by TADS. Though not able to provide the service in school, provision had been provided online and face to face where safe. There had been 29 drop-ins, with 25 service users reporting an improvement in their wellbeing. Within the quarter two new volunteers had joined the project.

Those present discussed the legacy impacts of the pandemic, including an anticipated increase in unemployment. It was noted that a workshop was being organised in order to consider the services provided by the Area Council in light of the pandemic.

RESOLVED:- that the report be received.

27 Notes from the Dearne Ward Alliances (Dac.15.03.2021/10)

The meeting received the notes from the Dearne North Ward Alliance held on 1st February, and 2nd March, 2021, and Dearne South Ward Alliance held on 1st February, and 2nd March, 2021.

At the meeting in February, the Dearne South Alliance had discussed the provision of veg boxes during half term, Covid testing in the area, the work of the allotment group and also provision against flooding in the area.

At the subsequent meeting in March, the Dearne South Ward Alliance had discussed healthy holidays and the 5 ways to wellbeing project which had been delivered over social media. Thanks were given to all involved in delivering a very well-received programme.

The Dearne North meeting had also discussed healthy holidays and the veg box provision at the meeting in February and at the meeting in March had considered the impact of the provision and the 5 ways to wellbeing social media campaign. The Alliance considered the support for business in the area and spoke about providing hanging baskets on the high street during the summer months.

RESOLVED that notes from the respective Ward Alliances be received.

28 Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds (Dac.15.03.2021/11)

The Area Council Manager spoke to the item. It was noted that the Dearne North Ward had an opening balance of £12,247.12 in 2020/21 which included £247.12 of underspend from the previous financial year and £2,000 from the Covid support fund. After supporting nine projects, a balance of £182.92 remained.

For the Dearne South Ward, the starting budget for 2020/21 was £16,605.12 which included £4,605.12 of underspend carried forward from the previous financial year and £2,000 from the Covid support fund. The Ward Alliance Fund had supported 12 projects and a balance of £1,317.72 remained.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

29 Appreciation

It was noted that Councillors C. Johnson and Phillips would not be standing in the forthcoming election. Thanks were given for all the hard work both had undertaken in the area, and for their contribution to the Area Council.

Chair