

MEETING:	South Area Council
DATE:	Friday, 5 June 2020
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Andrews BEM, Eastwood, Franklin, Frost, Lamb, Saunders, Shepherd, Smith, Stowe and Sumner

40 Election of Chair

As the Chair was unavailable, a Chair was elected for the meeting.

RESOLVED:- That Councillor Stowe be elected as chair for the meeting.

41 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Frost declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute numbers 44 and 45 due to his position as director of Age UK Barnsley.

42 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and made necessary introductions.

43 Minutes of the Meeting of South Area Council held on 14th February, 2020

The meeting considered the minutes of South Area Council held on 14th February, 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the South Area Council held on 14th February, 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

44 Covid-19 Presentation

David Robinson, Service Director Customer Information and Digital Services, Phil Hollingsworth, Service Director Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities and Lisa Lyon South Area Council Manager were welcomed to the meeting to present the item.

An overview of the strategic approach was provided, acknowledging that Covid-19 was different to previous incidents due to its length and ongoing impact. The recovery provided an opportunity for renewal and restart in some areas, and it was acknowledged that responses needed to be agile and adaptive due to the complicated nature of the situation.

However, the pandemic also offered opportunities to realign values, strengthen relationships with partners, and create a new normal as restrictions begin to lift. Members heard how the Government had drafted a recovery and renewal strategy, and one was in development at a South Yorkshire level. Barnsley plans would align and be complementary. It was noted future plans needed to be agile and interactive,

in order to respond to the need for services to be turned on and off in relation to further peaks. It was also noted that responses would be different depending on the needs of particular groups of people, including those shielding.

Three horizons were considered – h1 immediate recovery steps; h2 post-peak recovery steps; and h3 realising the recovery objectives. It was suggested that Barnsley was moving into h2, with lockdown being lifted, and that this was a period of innovation and that positives from the pandemic needed to be retained. As Barnsley moves forward, the h3 horizon will be the future that we want with the outcomes Barnsley desires.

Members heard how the Council's draft recovery strategy encompassed 5 points; Humanitarian – Health and Wellbeing; Business Economy; Building Resilience; Education and Attainment; and Infrastructure and the Environment. It was recognised that all of which needed to be underpinned by the financial stability of the Council.

Members noted the steps being undertaken to develop and implement the recovery strategy, including conducting impact analysis, considering what services need to be restarted, maintained, or discontinued, and the need to monitor, learn and be adaptive going forward. It was noted that plans required the contribution of a wide range of partners across Barnsley.

In considering the role of Area Councils, the valuable contribution they played in responding to the crisis through the flexing of commissioned services, and the focus of community organisations was acknowledged, as was the role they would play in assisting recovery.

Members noted that, in light of the current financial position, the Council was reviewing all budgets and service areas to ensure they remained relevant in relation to Covid-19 and recovery efforts. Members were reminded of the cessation of all non-essential expenditure earlier in the year.

For the Area Council, the overall budget remained unaltered for 2020/21, but it was suggested that there was a need to review priorities and commissioning intentions to ensure that they were still relevant.

Those present heard of the anticipated challenges ahead, which included poverty and worklessness; schooling and education; mental health and emotional wellbeing; re-establishing the fabric of society; and impacts on health and wellbeing from a reduced accessing of services.

However, it was noted that the Council's strategic direction such as in relation to digital, an inclusive economy and Zero40 remained relevant. It was also suggested that the pandemic had offered opportunities, with agile working potentially supporting more district centres, the establishment of support networks in the communities, and a greater insight into those who are most vulnerable in communities.

Members were reminded of the guidance issued in relation to Ward Alliance Funds, and that the base budget of £10,000 per ward would remain, but plans for an additional £10,000 had been paused due to the current financial situation. It was emphasised that Ward Alliance expenditure should support recovery efforts, with the

only exception being where finance had already been approved and local businesses have committed resources.

Although there was an interest in re-establishing community events, it was acknowledged that this was not appropriate in the current climate, but that this position would be reviewed for 2021/22.

Members noted the previous requirement for Ward Alliance Funds to match 50% of their budgets with external finance or volunteer time, and that this would be difficult to achieve and would therefore be relaxed for the current financial year.

An update was provided in relation to the provision of grass cutting, which had been impacted on from prioritising domestic waste collection. It was noted that that this would now recommence, with the backlog being addressed in due course. In addition, it was noted that the collection of domestic green waste was due to recommence on 9th June.

In relation to the work of the Area Team, Members heard that as soon as lockdown was announced the team had gathered information regarding the response by the community and the local support networks being established. Support was available throughout the area with volunteers offering befriending, collection of prescriptions and help with shopping. The team produced ward plans in order to direct residents and partners to assistance. In addition, social media and neighbourhood networks were used to disseminate information both about local support and that available more generally.

Members heard how the services commissioned by the Area Council had been flexed in order to take account of the situation. All services engaged in dialogue with the Area Council Manager early and responded quickly to adapt the service.

Age UK Barnsley had considered ways to work more safely and had concentrated their resources on the most vulnerable. 69 users were receiving support. A number of the existing volunteers were unable provide support as they were shielding, however, overall volunteer numbers had increased and discussions were taking place about how the additional volunteers could be retained. In addition to normal delivery, wellbeing boxes had been delivered, and afternoon teas had also been delivered to celebrate VE day.

The Tidy Team had changed focus, recognising that they were unable to work closely with volunteers, and due to some staff self-isolating. Their main programme was now being delivered without volunteers, and the team was also supporting Neighbourhood Services in a number of 'hotspot' areas, with over 1,000 bags of waste collected. Members noted that there were plans for wider public engagement in a forthcoming dog fouling campaign.

CAB had altered their delivery, with services being provided through telephone, email and through their website. 126 clients were being supported, which was lower than seen previously but clients had increasingly complex cases. Previously benefit and debt advice had predominantly been requested, however increasingly support was required with employment and housing issues.

Although District Enforcement had ceased to issue fixed penalty notices, they had continued patrolling, and had dispersed groups, put signs up in play areas, and had provided intelligence around the area. The Private Sector Housing Officer had also been patrolling and continued to provide assistance to vulnerable residents requiring support.

The South Area Team had worked with parent support advisors, helping to support those who were unable to access learning online. The team had provided signposting to Council services and had supported the establishment of the Emergency Contact Centre by delivering 6,000 leaflets alongside Councillors, Council staff and those employed through South Area Council contracts.

The team had supported the establishment of Community Responders, working closely with Barnsley CVS in order to ensure appropriate training and support was in place for volunteers, and matching them to requests for support.

74 requests for support had been received, and 44 Community Responders engaged, with a number of those requesting support having complex underlying issues. The majority of requests were for befriending as opposed to for assistance with shopping, and the prevalence of loneliness in all age groups had been noted. The efforts being made by the Community Responders was recognised by the team, even though a celebratory event could not be held in the current situation.

Members were reminded of the current priorities of the Area Council, and it was noted that £54,318 remained unallocated in the current financial year. In addition, £1,180 of income from the Kingdom Contract remained, and £9,062 allocated to the South Area Council Health and Wellbeing fund.

Noted were the contracts already in place and their end dates, together with the grants provided through the Health and Wellbeing Fund. Members were also reminded of previous discussions in relation to work to address social isolation and the need to make a decision with regards to this at the next meeting. Also noted was the work to progress strength and balance training, which had been put on hold.

Noted was the progress being made on Smoke Free Hoyland, with efforts being made to arrange a launch. The links to the Principal Towns programme and the economic impact of Covid-19 on businesses were acknowledged. Those present were reminded of discussions in relation to road safety and air quality around schools; food access; and the possibility of holding health and wellbeing roadshows in summer as well as winter.

45 Discussion: reflections on the presentation and how the Area Council can assist our communities in recovery

Members were reminded of the five strategic priorities and were asked to consider whether the priorities of the Area Council aligned and whether services could continue, perhaps amended. In addition, Members were asked to highlight what might not align and may need to cease, or where there may be gaps that would require addressing.

Questions were raised around the financial impact of the pandemic, and whether area budgets may reduce to assist with the delivery of statutory services. Members

heard how the Council was in an unprecedented situation, and all non-essential expenditure had been halted. All services were being reconsidered in relation to their contribution to the recovery effort, but the important role of the Area Council was recognised, with the current budgets being maintained.

The work of the Area Council and all Council staff was acknowledged in this difficult time.

Members noted the pressure on the local economy and positive impact of the Council in the effective distribution of support grants. It was suggested that levels of unemployment may rise in the community, and the economy was an area which the Area Council and Ward Alliance may wish to provide support. However, it was important to avoid duplication with other services being provided, or those being planned.

The meeting discussed the benefits of meetings such as the Ward Alliance being held in person, such as the Town Hall, and it was noted that meetings were taking place to discuss the possible reopening of certain venues.

Discussion then centred around the impact on children and young people from the closure of schools, especially for those families who did not have internet access. Also acknowledged was the impact on the mental health on young people.

It was noted that work had taken place to provide technology to families who did not have access to online learning, and Members were encouraged to provide feedback on any families with outstanding issues. The ongoing costs of this were noted, and Members heard how discussions were taking place with schools with regards to this.

In relation to the mental health impact of the pandemic, Members were made aware that work on hidden harm was underway in the Mental Health and Resilience subgroup. An assessment which considered impact across the life course was nearing completion and would be shared with Members in due course.

The need for further discussion was acknowledged and it was suggested that briefing with Members be established, with the outcome of this to feed into the next meeting of the Area Council.

RESOLVED that a Member briefing be arranged to discuss this subject in more detail, with any emerging recommendations to be considered by a future meeting of the Area Council.

46 Close of the meeting

The Chair declared the meeting closed.

Chair