

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEARNE AREA COUNCIL 18th January 2021

Report of the Dearne Area Council Manager

Environmental, Education and Volunteering service

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek delegated responsibility to make changes to the current activities/targets of the environmental, education and volunteer service current delivered by Twigg's Grounds Maintenance.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That members note the changes to the current service activities and targets
- 2.2 That members delegate responsibility to the Executive Director of Communities in order to implement agreed changes by way of a variation to contract

3.0 Background

- 3.1 At the end of March 2021 the environmental, education and volunteer service will have been operating for two years. The third-year extension was agreed at the Area Council on the 16th of November 2020, with an option to extend for a further year thereafter.
- 3.2 The current specification focus is around working with existing groups and volunteers, businesses, provider social action events, education in schools as well as reactive and proactive work around areas of blight.
- 3.3 COVID has brought about many challenges for services with many having to adapt their delivery. During the first couple of months of the pandemic Twigg's flexed their services in order to assist neighbourhood services by targeting areas of the Dearne. However working with volunteers, groups, businesses and schools has proved difficult due to restrictions and changes in priorities for organisations. Made even more difficult with the Prime minister's announcement on the 4th of January 2021.
- 3.4 On the 14th of December 2020 Elected Members, the Area Manager and procurement met in order to discuss the activities and targets that had been set for Twigg's at start of their contract. The purpose of this meeting was to review targets and the option of putting in place a contract variation.

4.0 **Outcome of meeting**

4.1 Due to the difficulties faced by the service in being able to promote their offer more widely, Elected Members felt that the following activities/targets should be put on hold for the next 12 months.

- No. of local businesses supported - members felt that businesses have and will continue to have bigger priorities in the current lockdown and COVID recovery phase.
- No. of new volunteers at Twiggs events – members felt this target was unrealistic because of the limitations in promoting their own events. If new volunteers came forward to assist this can still be reported within the narrative report rather than any target set.
- No. of groups/individuals taking ownership and maintaining areas - members felt this target was unrealistic because of the limitations in promoting events. If groups or individuals came forward to take ownership of areas, then the service should still assist by way of loaning out equipment, giving advice and this could still be reported within the narrative report rather than any target set.
- No. of impact sessions delivered in Dearne Schools – it is very doubtful that the service will be able to go into schools in the upcoming period. Especially in light of the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the shutting of all schools. However the general thoughts were that links should still be maintained.
- No. of impact sessions delivered to groups – the groups that the service is currently working with have already received these sessions. Therefore the development of new groups to deliver impact sessions to would be unlikely in these current circumstances.

4.2 During the discussion Elected Members felt that the following activities should stay a focus albeit with amended targets and following the new lockdown guidelines.

- No. of established groups supported at planned events – Elected Members felt that this should remain a focus as some of the groups in the area were still operating and needed assistance with the work they were doing in their particular area, but the target for the year would be reduced. It was also noted that the narrative around this activity should change to ensure the service, where possible were supporting different groups as well as the groups that they provided regular assistance to. Obviously, advice would have to be sourced regarding the limitations now in place due to the prime Ministers announcement.
- No. of Twiggs social action events, “targeting local hotspots” - This was also noted as an important activity; however, the service is now not able to promote widely due to COVID guidance. Elected Members would like to see the hotspots proactivity identified by the service itself or by requests

from residents and activity undertaken even when volunteers were not on hand to help. It was noted that this needs to be across both wards and reported within the narrative report.

4.3 Elected Members discussed the reactive work undertaken by the service which is a focus in the current specification. That said over the last couple of years of the contract the Area Council have adopted a “working with” ethos therefore the emphasis has been on working with groups, schools, services and individuals to assist in this process. As stated above this will be a challenge with the Prime Ministers announcement and in the recovery period. Therefore Elected Members stated the need to have much more emphasis on the reactive and proactive elements of this contract, whilst still working with volunteers and groups that were able. Therefore a schedule will be developed for the service to work towards over the next 12 months.

4.4 The next steps in this process will be to:

- Work through these activities and targets with the provider.
- Work with procurement on a variation to the contract.
- Elected Members the Area Team and partners will start to build up a schedule of activity around reactive work. All of which will be reported within the narrative report. The first draft of this will be complete early February in time for the new financial year starting.
- The service to proactivity target areas that are not already within the schedule.
- The Area manager will have a discussion with neighbourhood services to ensure that there is no duplication of work and any work/areas that are currently on neighbourhood's services schedule will be avoided.

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