

MEETING:	Dearne Area Council
DATE:	Monday, 30 July 2018
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	Meeting Room, Goldthorpe Library

MINUTES

Present Councillors Noble (Chair), Gardiner, Gollick, C. Johnson, Phillips and Sixsmith MBE.

1 **Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

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

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Dearne Area Council held on 14th May, 2018 (Dac.30.07.2018/2)**

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 14th May, 2018 be approved as a true and correct record.

3 **Performance Report Q1 (Dac.30.07.2018/3)**

The Area Council Manager introduced the item making Members aware that performance indicators included information recorded to the end of June, 2018.

Members were made aware that there had been a number of changes in staffing in relation to the Environmental Enforcement contract monitoring meetings, and that the recent contract meeting had been very positive.

Within the first quarter 82 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued, 79 for littering and 3 for dog fouling. A restorative justice event had been held within the Dearne with young people taking part in lieu of paying the notice.

A number of specific operations had been conducted in the area, and officers continued to work flexibly in order to respond to complaints.

With reference to the housing officer contracted to the Area Council, Members heard how 158 requests for service had been made and 11 vulnerable households identified. The officer had conducted 30 property inspections, and signposted 15 clients onto additional services. Members were assured that any fly-tipping identified had been reported in through appropriate channels.

In relation to the contract with Twiggs Grounds Maintenance, performance was positive. 20 social action projects had been completed, and 5 areas had been adopted from a target of 8. The commission had engaged 150 volunteers, engaged with the local secondary school, and with 12 businesses. It was suggested that the target for engaging volunteers is discussed at the next contract meeting with a view to stretching this.

Members considered the performance of the project funded through Dearne Development Fund grants. DIAL had held 12 sessions and engaged with 50 residents. £62,097 of benefit had been gained.

Attendances at the Goldthorpe Development Group events remained consistent, with high numbers also volunteering. The group was working with the Area Team in order to engage a variety of additional health providers to attend the events for the remainder of the project.

An update was provided on the work undertaken by Dearne Electronic Community Village. Since November, 68 learners had enrolled. Each had been provided with intensive support and as a result 17 had returned to work. Members discussed the reliance of one person in order to deliver the service, noting that they were key to the success of the project. It was suggested that an apprentice position could provide additional support, and that this option be explored.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

4 Community Safety in the Dearne (Dac.30.07.2018/4)

The Community Safety Team Leader for the area was welcomed to the meeting to speak to the report. It was noted that the report contained information wider than the Dearne area, which aimed to provide some context.

Members noted the PACT priorities from April-June, which provided the proactive focus in addition to reactive work.

The meeting heard of the recent focus on fly-tipping. Progress has been made with vehicles seized and a number of prosecutions. Strongly worded letters had been distributed to many households, which suggested clearing the area would be preferable to prosecution. It was noted that officers worked with colleagues in other boroughs to try to combat cross border tipping, and a number of high quality cameras were placed in the area to help capture evidence of perpetrators.

Members applauded the work undertaken and it was suggested that this could be publicised more widely, taking care that the right messages were given.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

5 Dearne Area Council Financial Position and Progress of Projects (Dac.30.07.2018/5)

The Area Council Manager spoke to the report, previously circulated.

For the current financial year the Area Council had an opening balance of £208,467.96. £65,000 had been allocated to the Dearne Development Fund, and contracts had been continued for Environmental Enforcement, the Private Sector Housing Officer and the Environmental Education and Volunteering Service. Taking into account income from the Fixed Penalty Notices this left a total of £5,939.96 to allocate.

Members were reminded of their previous decision to allocate £2,000 per year for two years towards the Social Isolation Project. This was to be funded from the Dearne Development Fund project. Following the recharge for Fixed Penalty Notices it was suggested that this could now come from the Area Council budget.

An update was provided on the Railway Embankment Project, and it was noted that work on the entrance had progressed. The project had become a positive talking point for the area. Members heard how discussions were taking place regarding the memorial for the boys who had passed away on the site and potential relocation from the secondary school. Network Rail were also looking into the possibility of siting railway memorabilia on site. Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership had agreed to provide interpretation boards highlighting the heritage of the site and its transformation and had promised additional finance for fencing. Discussions had also taken place regarding the sponsorship of vegetable/flower boxes.

The Area Council Manager provided an update on the finance remaining as part of the Dearne Development Fund, which stood at £46,794.10.

Members noted the recent discussions to consider future commissions, with further discussions planned. Also noted was the update in relation to the Social Isolation Project. Three quotes had been requested and two received. Befriend had been successful in gaining the contract, but AGE UK had also expressed a desire to work in the area.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) The financial position of the Area Council be noted;
- (ii) That £2,000 per annum for two years to support the Social Isolation Project, previously agreed to be funded from the Dearne Development Fund budget, be funded from the Area Council Budget;
- (iii) That the progress of previously agreed projects be noted.

6 Strategic Housing (Dac.30.07.2018/6)

The Empty Homes Officer was welcomed to the meeting to speak about the work to support the return of empty homes back into use. Members and officers locally had been contacted to develop a greater understanding of the problematic properties.

1,600 properties had been identified throughout the borough and a variety of support was available for property owners. This included advice on probate, renting and how to sell. If the house was in disrepair, grants or loans were available, subject to conditions, to bring the property back into use. Help was also available for tenants and landlords in the form of support packs to ensure they were aware of their rights and obligations.

The officer provided details of the work undertaken with partner organisations working in the area in order to bring properties back into use.

Members heard how enforcement action could be used, and details were given about a sale being enforced locally. Assurances were given that any costs incurred by the Council would be recouped following the sale.

The possibility of using Compulsory Purchase Orders was discussed, however it was noted that this could be costly.

Officers were working closely with colleagues within Council Tax in order to take appropriate action with empty property owners, who were in arrears with their Council Tax.

It was suggested that a multi-agency group be convened to discuss the range of housing issues in the area, current intervention, and how partners can work better together to address the problem.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That thanks be given to the Empty Homes Officer for their work in the area and their attendance at the meeting;
- (ii) That details of the empty properties in the area, and action to be taken be taken be forwarded to Members; and
- (iii) That a multi-agency group be convened to discuss the best approaches to the housing issues in the area.

7 Notes from the Dearne Approach Steering Group held on 14th May, 2018 (Dac.30.07.2018/7)

Members considered the notes from the meeting held on 14th May, 2018.

RESOLVED that the notes from the Dearne Approach Steering Group be received.

8 Notes from the Dearne Ward Alliance held on 10th May and 12th July, 2018 (Dac.30.07.2018/8)

The meeting received the notes from the Dearne Ward Alliance held on 10th May, and 12th July, 2018. Members noted that the Alliance had considered GDPR, and also that the Ward Alliance Members had been invited to Heathergarth Primary School.

RESOLVED that notes from the respective Ward Alliances be received.

9 Report on the Use of Ward Alliance Funds (Dac.30.07.2018/9)

The Area Manager provided an overview on the use of Ward Alliance Funds.

Dearne North had approved £3,329.00 from an opening balance of £9,506.69, leaving £6,176.39 to be allocated. All projects had provided match funding.

Dearne South had approved £1,021.36 from an opening balance of £11,021.36, meaning £8,991.46 remained to be allocated. As with Dearne North all projects had provided match funding.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chair