

South West Local Area Committee

Meeting held 30 November 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Andrew Sangar (Chair), Tim Huggan (Deputy Chair), Sue Alston, Roger Davison, Barbara Masters, Ruth Milsom, Shaffaq Mohammed, Minesh Parekh, Colin Ross, Martin Smith and Cliff Woodcraft

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Otten.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

5. PRESENTATIONS FOLLOWED BY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

5.1 Before proceeding with the items on the agenda, the Chair Councillor Andrew Sangar read the following apology:

“Before we begin, this is to be recorded in the formal minutes of the meeting, I want to address the findings of a complaint to our resident Mr Lennox.

Mr Lennox, on the 29th September a formal complaint was submitted by you to the Chief Executive of Sheffield City Council. This was about the way in which the reply to your public question of the 28th September had been handled. A written acknowledgement has been issued and the matter is now concluded.

We have some learning points that we are taking forward to improve how we deal with public questions and resident contacts. We have tightened up on the triaging of public questions as a result. I would like to formally apologise to you for the

way we dealt with your question and subsequent issues you raised with us.”

Mr Lennox, who was present at the meeting, thanked the Chair for the apology.

5.2 The Chair explained that presentations would follow on the theme of the local environment, after which there would be an opportunity to speak to the panellists at stalls representing each service. There had not been capacity to include the local “Friends of” groups so another networking event regarding volunteering would be arranged in due course.

5.3 The presenters were introduced as follows:

- Geraldine– Sheffield Litter Pickers
- Dave Rice and Stuart Turner- Parks and Countryside Service
- Marta Alfaro Tirado- Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust
- Andrew France and Ian Ashmore- Waste Management/ Environmental Regulation

5.4 Geraldine Houlton of Sheffield Litter Pickers spoke first, explaining that she was an ambassador for the Sheffield Litter Pickers Facebook page which had 700 members. This was an active litter picking community across the city which she invited attendees to get involved with. This could be either by:

1. Being a local litter picker, e.g. on your own road
2. Getting involved in the events listed on the Facebook page which gave the opportunity to make friends while collecting litter.
3. Getting involved via your local Tenants and Residents Association, as they were organising litter picking initiatives which included refreshments.
4. Setting up a community litter picking group. The Council would provide equipment and remove the collected rubbish.

The benefits of the types of action listed above were to the individual- i.e. fresh air, increased fitness, making friends and to the community, wildlife and children.

5.5 A presentation on the Parks and Countryside Service, subsequently published on the Council’s website, was delivered by Stuart Turner (Programme Manager) and Dave Rice (Business Manager, Parks and Countryside Service).

The presentation outlined details of the different facilities managed by the service, the reduction in budget in recent years, recent green space improvements in local parks and at Forge Dam and Limb Brook, and the Shelter café at Whirlow Brook Park. It also outlined details of volunteering, allotments, and advised what the Services’ future priorities were.

5.6 A presentation, subsequently published on the Council’s website, entitled Waste and Recycling Services, was delivered by Andrew France (Waste Management Officer).

This outlined the services included in the contract with Veolia, the Energy Recovery facility, Beighton Materials Recycling Facility, and the Household Waste Recycling Centres. It also reported on waste performance figures and concluded

by giving details on new projects which were being planned.

- 5.7 A presentation entitled “Our Work in the South West Local Area Committee”, subsequently published on the Councils’ website, was delivered by Marta Alfaro Tirado (Nature Recovery Manager, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust).

This outlined the work the Trust did in the area including on Nature Reserves, partnership working with other environmental organisations, outdoor learning with young people, and plans for nature recovery. Additionally, the Trust had new projects underway such as the Land Management Advice Service and the development of a plan focused on young people.

- 5.8 Ian Ashmore, (Head of Environmental Regulation) thanked the litter pickers for the work that they do.

He advised that a leaflet entitled “Not Born Yesterday” raising awareness about scams was available. This was particularly relevant because loneliness and a lack of feeling safe could prevent people volunteering.

Mr Ashmore outlined the services Environmental Regulation were involved with, which included work to combat illegal dog imports, high hedges, Knotweed, contaminated land, and general pollution. They were also responsible for infection control and the issuing of business permits.

Two projects were highlighted:

1. The Volunteering Strategy, which set out how to work better with volunteer groups in the city. The Council wished to hear from environmental volunteering groups about what assistance they needed.
2. Environmental Toolkit- this was being developed to make it easier for people to get involved in improving the local environment. The Council wanted to know the top 10 or 15 issues which needed to be tackled in the local area. These would then be put into a toolkit to advise people how to deal with them. Case studies would also be included, such as the Kelham Island Group who had put artwork on telecoms boxes.

- 5.9 The Chair invited members of the public present to ask questions of the panellists and the following information was given by panellists regarding topics discussed:

Rewilding

Marta Alfaro Tirado advised that the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust was doing as much as they could towards rewilding. Their Land Advisory Service has been set up and would be promoting it.

The Waste Management Service was supporting the Species Recovery Fund to improve habitats at a landscape scale and to support nature recovery networks.

Bins

Smaller brown bins were not currently available, but the provision of different size bins was being investigated.

Flyposting on bus stops on Ecclesall Road

Owners of bus stops were responsible for removing posters, this was generally the bus company. It could be difficult to prove who was flyposting and to catch them. There was CCTV on Ecclesall Road, but people were aware of how to evade it.

A graffiti strategy was being developed for the city.

Unruly dogs and damage to wildlife

Dog ownership had risen and so had the damage caused by them to wildlife and habitats. People were encouraged to keep dogs on leads. Signage to this effect had been put up in nature reserves. It was possible to use Public Space Protection Orders, but a need would have to be demonstrated and orders relating to dogs were especially tricky. If there were issues at a particular site, this could be considered. Some areas in Ecclesall Woods had been fenced off to protect them from dogs.

Pedestrian Access to Tips

Technically all sites allowed pedestrian access but there were health and safety issues due to mixing pedestrians and traffic. Work was being done to resolve this.

Getting young people into volunteering

The Wildlife Trust provided paid training with certification, to encourage young people into volunteering. The aim of this is to train young people to a sufficient standard to enable them to get jobs in the sector. This was made possible by lottery funding.

Litter Pickers used posters and social media for volunteer recruitment and there were young people involved.

Cyclists causing a nuisance/ damage in Bingham Park

A member of the public stated that cyclists were taking over the Park and causing damage to footpaths in the ancient woodland. As the Council's policy was to encourage cycling, nothing was being done about this. She asked if the by laws could be amended to stop cyclists damaging the environment.

Panellists stated that responsible cycling was encouraged and footpath users needed to respect each other. Work was being done to produce messaging to that effect.

The Chair thanked the panellists for their contribution.

6. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SESSION- LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.

- 6.1 The webcast was paused while attendees were given the opportunity to circulate and ask questions informally to the presenters.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 7.1 The webcast restarted and the Committee received the following

questions from members of the public who had submitted the questions prior to the meeting:

(a) Mike Hodson

“At the 6 July LAC Meeting I asked some questions about whether the LAC had concerns about the process by which Parks & Countryside Service negotiated a Lease of part of Millhouses Park to True North Brew Co. that owns the Waggon & Horses pub adjacent to the park; and about how Parks & Countryside Service had dealt with the Friends of Millhouses Park as part of that process.

The written answers I received did not answer the questions: and were written by an Officer of the Parks & Countryside Service, not by anyone from the LAC. I complained about this to the Chair and the LAC Manager; and Paul May our Chair and I met Cllr Sangar and Ms Bustamante in October to discuss my complaint. Cllr Sangar agreed that I was correct; that the answers I got did not answer the questions I put; and that the Minutes of that July meeting should be amended to show that was the case. That has not happened because the Head of Democratic Services has advised that Minutes of Council Committees can only be amended by the Committee itself.

I am also asking the LAC if they agree that it is part of the duties of Officers and Members of Local Area Committees to ensure that questions from the public are answered correctly and appropriately and in due time - as with all Council Committees - as part of the general democratic process?

Does the SW LAC agree that the right to ask questions at public meetings of this, and other Council Committees, is an inherent part of the democratic process; and that where answers to those questions are able to be answered in the meeting that should be the norm? And would they also agree that every effort should be made by Officers and Councillors on those Committees to ensure that the answers given are relevant, correct and complete; and that questioners should have the right to follow-up questions in the event that they feel that has not been the case?”

The Chair, Councillor Andrew Sanger, stated that it was not an inherent right to ask questions at LACs but it was a right that Members had wanted people to have. Sheffield Council had been a leader in this. Following the referendum, the Council was in the second year of its committee structure. Work was still being done by the Governance Committee to finalise the process for democratic engagement, including how public questions should be addressed.

He added that the South West LAC did not have policy making powers in terms of the Parks or Council assets and therefore the appropriate place for Parks related discussion was the Communities Committee. The appropriate place for Assets discussion was the Finance committee.

He explained that the South West LAC welcomed questions on matters that could be addressed by the Committee and matters that are within the decision-making scope of the Local Area Committee. Where an issue was being addressed at a Policy Committee the scope of input that a LAC could have might be minimal, particularly in the case of legal and contractual matters.

(b) Paul May

1. *“How were the responses and round-table discussions at the July Meeting about Community Safety recorded and evaluated, and will they be reported, whether to a future meeting or by email?”*
2. *Reading both the original Community Plan, and the updated version of the Plan produced more recently, it is clear there are many targets throughout the Plan which have both review dates and outcome dates. They also have timelines for achievement, many of which have now been exceeded. We have not seen any of these outcomes from the Plan reported at the SW LAC meetings. Can you tell us when these will be published and how they will be evaluated to give an overall assessment of how well the SW LAC has performed against its original targets?*
3. *Referring to the targets in the updated Plan, are these aspirational targets or just a list of those that came out of the Review? Will they also be assessed and contribute to that overall assessment?”*

Mr May's question was read out by Mike Hodson as Mr May was not present at the meeting.

The Chair advised a full written answer would be provided but also stated the following:

Question 1

The LAC Team collated together all the notes from the engagement sessions and produce a table of summary feedback received, this was collated together onto one summary. They see the feedback from the engagement sessions as highly valuable as it underpins the work they deliver in terms of projects on the community plan. It is the basis of what they focus projects and support on.

Question 2

The LAC Team had been providing summary updates at the LAC Public Meetings, at the last meeting they did this in the style of an information board. This was a response to the feedback they received at the previous public meeting in March, where they were asked to limit the time of the presentation on the LAC plan updates by the attendees present. They

expressed that they wanted to focus time on engagement instead.

The Chair added that a summary highlight report on progress made with the 22/23 Community Plan had been produced and copies of the report were printed off and available at the Public Meeting in September. The LAC Team wanted to improve the reporting to residents on progress and were developing the webpages to include a section specifically for this. Here you would be able to read updates on each of the projects they had underway and this would open up an opportunity for residents to get involved, if they were interested.

The Chair also explained that the pace of delivery on some of the items had meant the LAC Team had to roll forward some of the actions onto this year. Over the last year, they had learnt the challenges of operating in a new organisational set up and understood more realistically the kind of agile approach required to ensure that they do deliver. The approach to achieving deliverables was very much developmental; test and learn. A large part of what they delivered was dependent on how far they could influence through collaborative working with other services and partners and their available capacity as well as the LAC Teams capacity. There was a wide breadth of activity in the plan that involved a number of partners and services collaborating together.

Question 3

The items in the updated plan formed the LAC Team's work programme that they were currently delivering. They were aiming to have achieved all actions by end of March '23. Under each of the themes and priorities set out they had listed actions that they assessed and deemed as being achievable in the time period and within the budget they had available, and that will be impactful on reaching results to address the issue.

The Chair advised that the measure of success would be whether they achieved the project/initiative, an assessment of outcomes would be delivered in the post March period and would need to involve testimonies from those that had either taken part in an activity that they had helped facilitate to help measure the social value impact.

(c) Christopher Pennell

"A Green Belt runs in the west of our LAC area (and for that matter also in west of the North LAC) and beyond that the National Park. Given the current propensity for national politicians to play fast and loose with Green Belt designations suggesting that much of it is scrubland and fit only for building houses on, should the Council do more to defend such land where it is clearly of value for reasons other than those set out in planning rules for creating Green Belt.

The South West developed Area hosts on the west Green Belt land which stretches across to the Peak District National Park boundary and

provides significant ecosystem benefits to Sheffield residents, such as strong biodiversity, great access and recreational opportunities, valued landscapes in their own right to gladden the heart and spirit, and opportunities to combat climate change and to reduce flood risks.

Recognising that the value of such land as is designated as Green Belt within our LAC area is much more than the sum of the five purposes for Green Belt designation, the Dore community is drafting a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Green Belt land wrapped around developed Dore. We will in the New Year want to consult the City Council on our draft Strategy. Who should we consult? Who within the Council team has the knowledge and the clout to assess the true value and ecosystem service potential of the land beyond the developed areas of the South West LAC up to the boundaries of the National Park. Will we get a knowledgeable and considered hearing?"

The Chair stated the following:

The Council was in the process of reviewing the Local Plan and many people had contributed to this. Planning Officers were putting most of their efforts into getting the Local Plan adopted.

The development of a supplementary planning document that is specific to Dore would not be a priority for the Planning team at present, though they intend to develop a city-wide supplementary planning document on Biodiversity Net Gain and other aspects of design for biodiversity.

He explained that their limited resources were currently being channelled towards supporting work on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for South Yorkshire (work being led by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority). Mapping of natural capital (including the Dore area) had already been completed and the maps were available on the SYMCA landing page. Dore Village Society might find it useful to use the information held there in developing their Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The Planning team anticipated that one of the aspirations of the LNRS would be to embed Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards within it. This would also include elements such as active travel, ecological prioritisation, and waterways management. The LNRS would cover the whole of the city, so would incorporate the Dore area. There would be engagement with the public and community groups as part of developing the LNRS.

- 7.2 The Chair thanked everyone present for attending the meeting and reminded them to fill in a feedback form.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

- 8.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be on Thursday 22nd February at 7.00pm, venue to be confirmed.

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