

South West Local Area Committee

Meeting held 16 September 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Sue Alston, Tim Huggan, Mohammed Mahroof, Barbara Masters, Ruth Milsom, Joe Otten (Deputy Chair), Andrew Sangar (Chair) and Martin Smith

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roger Davison, Shaffaq Mohammed, Colin Ross and Cliff Woodcraft.

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 MEETINGS

4.1 The minutes of meetings of the Committee held on 19th May and 7th July 2021, were approved as correct records.

5. AUTHORISATION OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER TO TAKE DECISIONS ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE

5.1 The Community Services Manager, submitted a report setting out the mechanism for the Local Area Committee to enable decisions to be taken quickly and to respond to emerging issues by authorising the Community Services Manager to make decisions on expenditure between Committee meetings, subject to certain conditions.

5.2 **RESOLVED:** That the South West Local Area Committee authorises the Community Services Manager to make decisions on expenditure from any budgets allocated to the Local Area Committee provided that:

- The decision is taken in consultation with the Local Area Committee Chair.
- Spending is in line with any specific purposes of the allocated budget.

- The decision may not approve expenditure of more than £5,000.
- A report detailing the delegated spending decisions taken by the Community Services Manager is presented to the next Local Area Committee meeting.

5.3 Reasons for Decision

The proposal to authorise decisions on any budgets allocated to the Committee can be discharged, in part, by the Community Services Manager will ensure the Committees can respond quickly to emerging local issues.

5.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

All decisions relating to budgets allocated to the Local Area Committee could be decided at Formal Committee Meetings only. Whilst this approach would ensure the involvement of all members of the Committee, it would mean that decisions to allocate spending for emerging and urgent local issues may not be made in a timely fashion.

5.5 Any Interest Declared or Dispensation Granted

None.

5.6 Reason for Exemption if Public/Press Excluded During Consideration

None.

5.7 Respective Director Responsible for Implementation

None.

5.8 Relevant Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee If Decision Called In

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

6. LOCAL AREA COMMITTEES - EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

6.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Community Services Manager on Local Area Committees (LACs), as part of the Empowering Communities Programme.

6.2 Denise Devoto reported on the operation and role of LAC, the initial funding allocation for the Committees, engagement activity, how the public could get involved, details of the Members of the Committee and the South West Local Area Committee Team and contact details relating to the LAC.

6.3 The Committee noted the information now reported as part of the presentation.

7. AGE UK SHEFFIELD - PEOPLE KEEPING WELL

7.1 The Committee received a presentation from Joanna Woodward (Age UK Sheffield) on funding, known as Community Funding Pots, provided by Age UK Sheffield to individuals, groups or organisations to undertake an activity that would benefit their local community. Ms Woodward reported that the money could be used by someone to either set up a new activity, or by an existing provider needing additional resources, and referred to a number of examples of activities funded in the past. She concluded by reporting on how people could join, or be referred into, an activity.

7.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) noted the information reported as part of the presentation; and
- (b) thanked Joanna Woodward for attending the meeting and making the presentation.

8. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

8.1 The Committee received the following questions from members of the public who had submitted the questions prior to the meeting, and who were in attendance to raise them: -

(a) Christopher Pennell

Will the South West LAC have any role in determining how CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds arising from development occurring in Dore will be spent and if so what role and on what authority?

In response, the Chair stated that the South West LAC will have the same role in determining spending in Dore as all LACs will have with the wards in their area. This will currently be in accordance with the Councillors' Guide approved by the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on Thursday, 13th December 2018.

The Cabinet decision under Item No. 8.2(b) states:-

“RESOLVED: That Cabinet:-

delegates authority to the Head of Libraries, Community Services & Learning & Skills, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety, to determine: (i) how the CIL Neighbourhood Portion allocated to each ward is spent, following engagement with local communities and Ward Councillors, subject to the proviso that monies are spent in accordance with agreed Ward Priorities and (ii) to determine the terms on which such expenditure is incurred including authorising the completion of any related funding agreement or other legal documentation”.

Unless this decision is amended, the LACs themselves do not make the

decisions, but are free to work with communities and make recommendations.

(b) Alan Kewley

1. I welcome this long-overdue review, but would request a pause for thought, to enable local electorates to consider these proposals more carefully, including the need for Ward Forums, to give citizens easier access to our City Council's new devolved decision-making processes.

In response, the Chair stated that whilst area working and the Local Area Committees were separate, they were linked in certain ways. The Cabinet, at its meeting in March 2021, and the Council, had approved the formulation of the Local Area Committees. In terms of previous area working by the Council, there had been Area Panels (2000 to 2009), Community Assemblies (2009 to 2013) and Area Partnerships from 2013 to 2021. Councillor Sangar made reference to the Referendum held in 2021, which had resulted in a majority vote for a shift from the Cabinet/Leader model to a Committee system. At the present time, there was the Co-operative Executive Committee, Governance Committee, Scrutiny Committees and Transitional Committees, with plans for the new Committee system to be implemented in May 2022. There will be a number of new Committees appointed, including an Audit Committee. The way the Local Area Committees will operate will develop over time.

2. The City Council's main Website has become too complex to provide easy access to information on local issues. Could local Websites be introduced at LAC or Ward level to provide better access to local information, rather than the junk emails which are now being sent-out and received?

In response, Denise Devoto stated that the Council had recently created individual LAC web pages for each area – see www.sheffield.gov.uk/lac - these provide details for the specific LACs, and the Council Website was in the process of being re-designed, with timescales for this to be determined. Ms Devoto added that the team had distribution lists, which it used for the circulation of information relating to the LAC, as well as other community information/events that may be of interest to the public. If people did not wish to receive such emails, they should inform the team, and they would be removed from the list.

3. Who is responsible for scrutinising this new process to ensure its Effectiveness and Good Value, and how do they plan to get feedback from the electorate?

The Chair confirmed that there would be a review of the effectiveness of the new LAC arrangements in due course.

(c) Jason Leman

1. The ambition for the LACs is that they will succeed where Community Assemblies, Area Panels and Local Area Partnerships rarely made an impact. What's going to be different this time?

In response, the Chair stated that the Committee aimed to be open and inclusive, and wished to empower local communities. The Committee would engage with the communities to determine what issues there were in a local area. The Committees would allow for access to much wider mechanisms to be able to have a dialogue with local communities – not just public meetings, but online surveys and, with effect from 2022, the potential to webcast, which would offer a greater potential to engage and let the public have their say. The Committees had a dedicated staffing resource, as well as an identified Link Officer resource in named Services to address particular issues where normal channels, for whatever reason, may not be working as intended. The Committee had an initial budget of £100,000 to spend on agreed priorities. There had been a directive from the Council's new Chief Executive and Leader that the Council should look to do things differently, and LAC formed part of this process. The Committees had access to a whole host of data sources to be able to establish a baseline position and then track their effectiveness in addressing identified priorities. The Committees would also be working with the Voluntary and Community Faith Sector to capture input from groups they represent. The Committees would publish a Community Plan, which would outline what the agreed priorities were for that area, after consultation with the public/communities.

2. This LAC meeting is being held in Greystones, where our priorities might be the restoration of Bingham Park, or what we can do to support Banner Cross shops, or the availability of local health services. But every one of the many neighbourhoods in the South-West LAC will have their priorities. How will overall priorities be decided? Will those who shout loudest or speak with most eloquence at LAC meetings get funding, or will there be a process that reaches out and includes every community?

In response, the Chair referred to his previous response regarding community engagement, specifically the various mechanisms to capture as many voices as possible across all the four Council Wards. LACs were a grouping of Wards over a broader geography, and the aim was to identify issues and priorities that go across boundaries, to have the greatest impact, rather than focussing down on potentially very small geographies. In addition, Ward Councillors also had access to small pots of funding (Ward Pots) to support projects and initiatives at a local, Ward level.

3. The LAC focuses on our locality and local issues sometimes seem to be quite narrow, but climate change is a local issue, as is social inequality, as is education. People in our area come from many places and face many challenges. Will the Community Plan consider what we can do locally to address the bigger issues we face?

In response, the Chair stated that LACs have been established to focus on issues at a local level. 'Bigger picture' issues will be the responsibility of the Council as a whole, with the LACs having the ability to feed into whole Council thinking with regard to policy and strategy.

(d) Paul May

1. Do you worry that party politics may destroy local community democracy?
There will be a range of political representatives on the Committee.

In response, the Chair stated that, regardless of party affiliation, a Councillor represented, and worked on behalf of, the whole of their community. LACs wouldn't change that. The Committees were intended to bring decision-making closer to the local people, and to give local people a louder voice in matters affecting their neighbourhoods and communities. The LACs would therefore engage with their respective communities to identify what the issues and priorities were within their local areas, and to identify potential solutions. LACs were intended to engage, enable and empower those communities.

2. Will LAC decisions/proposals go back to the Council for ratification?

In response, the Chair stated that LACs had certain powers delegated to them and could only make decisions within their delegated powers. In respect of these delegated powers, decisions and proposals would not have to be referred back to the Council for ratification. All other decisions would continue to be made as they were previously. Issues currently dealt with at Ward level would continue to be dealt with at Ward level by the Ward Members, for example by using Ward Pot funding. LACs would be informed about some Ward level activities, including Ward Pot allocations, and if there was a desire to fund cross-Ward projects, LACs could give guidance, but could not make a decision. LACs would act as a formal consultation mechanism on Council and partner strategies and policies. Items may be added to the agenda of a LAC meeting by the Community Service Manager, in consultation with the Chair, by referral from Full Council, a Council Committee, an Overview and Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, the Executive, the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance Officer, subject to compliance with the appropriate rules. Each LAC would provide a report to Full Council on their Community Plan and progress against objectives no more than once in a Municipal Year.

3. I note that residents in the Broomhill - Tapton area have been central in writing a neighbourhood plan which the Council has adopted. It includes the local community having the power to decide their own planning priorities eg developing green spaces, locating areas for housing development and influencing infrastructure such as roads. Do you envisage our LAC moving in a similar direction?

In response, the Chair stated that whether residents chose to explore the potential for a Neighbourhood Plan would be something that they would need to determine themselves, led by the local community. This was not something that LACs would take a lead on pursuing.

(e) Mike Hodson

What plans do the Councillors making up the SW LAC have for implementing their Terms of Reference, to promote the involvement of local people in the

democratic process...to bring decision-making closer to those local people ... for engaging with local residents and organisations ... and to enable those local people to influence Council decisions... etc.?

In response, Denise Devoto stated that whilst the LAC was responsible for decision-making, it would be keen to engage with the local communities in the best way the communities felt fit. Once the Committee had engaged with the communities, this would help it to identify what the priorities were across the area. The aim was to develop a Community Plan by January 2022, and further consultation would be held if required.

Councillor Joe Otten queried how such a plan could be developed when there was no clarity as to the area's priorities, and suggested that the Committee should publish a draft Plan, give the public an opportunity to comment on, and feed into, the draft, then develop a final version by January 2022. Nik Hamilton stated that whilst he appreciated the deadline of January 2022 was not far off, the Committee could ask the public to identify three top priorities in their respective Wards, and include them in the Plan. He added that their report on the Community Plans would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

(f) Jennie Street

1. That the junction of Totley Brook Road, Abbeydale Road South and Bushey Wood Road desperately needs a roundabout because it is the most awful – and dangerous junction and causes huge traffic jams backed up Totley Brook Road, and some very bad driving behaviour.
2. That the grass verges on Mickley Lane need to be converted to parking places, because Mickley Lane is a slalom with heavy traffic cutting through from Dronfield, and not nearly enough parking on that road. Lots of near misses and unpleasant driving behaviour, and absolutely no visibility for cars coming out of the bottom end of Green Oak Road, resulting in lots of near misses. The grass verges get parked on anyhow, especially at the bottom near Green Oak Road, so could easily be converted, and, with sleeping policemen on the road would greatly improve safety.

In response, Councillor Martin Smith stated that highways issues, particularly speeding, represented the biggest problem in the Totley Ward, and suggested that the Committee should meet with Highways Officers to discuss such problems. Councillor Smith stressed the importance of the public contacting their Ward Councillors to raise their concerns.

The Chair added that the Highways Service was one of the delivery partners of the LACs, and the Council had identified a £4m budget for highways schemes city-wide.

- 8.2 The Committee received the following questions from members of the public who raised them at the meeting: -

(a) Alison Warner

What is the Local Authority's plan for "catch-up" in education and will this strategy be addressed on a LAC level following consultation with schools, parents and pupils/students?

In response, Councillor Mohammed Mahroof, Chair of the Education, Health and Care Transitional Committee, stated that he was well aware of the current attainment gap in terms of educational achievement by pupils attending schools in the south west and other areas of the city, with most schools in the south west being oversubscribed. He also made reference to issues regarding special educational needs city-wide which, in his opinion, had not been addressed adequately by the Council. Councillor Mahroof stated that he believed the LAC should, in some capacity, be looking at education as part of its work, even if it was in a lobbying role.

(b) Jim Turton

Why are residents at Westminster Crescent and Westminster Avenue being ignored by the City Council over the abhorrent behaviour by a handful of tenants?

In response, Councillor Sue Alston expressed her concerns and offered to contact the Housing Service on the member of public's behalf.

Councillor Ruth Milsom stated that there were similar incidents of anti-social behaviour in all wards across the city which, whilst being taken seriously by the Council, were very difficult to resolve. She recommended people to make a continuous effort to contact officers in an attempt to resolve the problems. She added that there were dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Officers for each area of the city.

The Chair stated that this issue would be referred to relevant Housing Officers, and a written response would be provided to Mr Turton.

(c) Maggie Riley

What happens to the £100,000 budget if there is no legitimate local demand/imperative for investment that will significantly benefit local citizens? Will the LAC be able to access this funding in a subsequent year, in addition to a further allocated budget? I'm concerned that there will be an indecent search for a rationale to spend the city's scarce resources on lower priority initiatives when very little is spent on high priority services such as schools and social care.

The Chair stated that a written response would be sent to Ms Riley.

(d) Steve Reynolds

Can the Council look into the road safety measures on the A57 Manchester

Road, Lydgate Lane, Tapton Hill Road and Shore Lane, in the vicinity of the local schools following a serious accident to a young boy crossing Manchester Road recently?

In response Councillor Mohammed Mahroof stated that he was aware of this incident, as well as the general traffic problems on Manchester Road, and had raised his concerns with Highways Officers on a number of occasions. Councillor Mahroof stated that he had walked round the area with Highways Officers, and had been informed by them that the area was not deemed a priority for the Council based on the death/accident rates. He added that there were also serious problems regarding parking in the area, and stressed the need for both Councillors and the public to keep raising their concerns.

Councillor Ruth Milsom concurred with these comments and suggested that the LAC could look at taking collective action, including comments from local residents, on this issue.

(e) Shauna Naylor

Is it possible to get some help into cleaning up/opening up the River Sheaf? There seems to be some pollutants going into it a couple of times a week, on a regular basis, from nearby Topley somewhere, and the residents are not getting anywhere with Yorkshire Water.

The Chair stated that a written response would be sent to Ms Naylor.

(f) Don Lennox

The Sheffield Plan says there should be smaller homes and “older people’s independent living accommodation” in the Ecclesall/Greystones area. There is derelict land at the top of Murray Road – old garages/abandoned cars/buildings, which could be a suitable site. Could this be achieved?

The Chair stated that a written response would be sent to Mr Lennox.

8.3 The LAC Manager reported that the Committee had received four further questions, as follows, from individuals in attendance, who chose not to ask them at the meeting, and that written responses would be given to these questions.

(a) Amanda Baxter

Do the LACs respond to questions about issues which are city-wide, not particularly local? For example, I think the Council should take action to persuade or require takeaway restaurants to stop using plastic food containers, but this is a city-wide issue, not a local one. Similarly, I think cycle infrastructure should be improved.

(b) Jason Leman

If the aim of the LACs is to “Engage, Empower, Enable”, why are questions

from the public taken at the end of the meeting?

(c) Susan Smith

1. I understand Sheffield City Council is a signed up member of New Local – the new Local Government network. Who is responsible for this connection?
2. Does Age UK support the whole of the LAC area?

(d) Joe Sellars

Given the average age of attendees at the meeting was probably 60+, what specific actions/activities will the LAC undertake to engage with young people?

(e) Moira Bannister

How does the LAC propose to involve a much wider age group, particularly, young parents and young people, in order to gain a broader community perspective?