

North Local Area Committee

Meeting held 9 March 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hooper (Chair), Penny Baker, Vic Bowden, Lewis Chinchen, Julie Grocutt, Mike Lavery, Ann Whitaker, Richard Williams and Alan Woodcock

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors' Francyne Johnson and Vickie Priestley.

2. EXCLUSIONS 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 meetings of the Committee held on 30 September, 2021, were approved as a correct record.

5. APPROVAL OF THE NORTH LAC COMMUNITY PLAN 2022-23

5.1 The Committee received a presentation from David Luck, Community Services Manager. A survey had been conducted across the city alongside community engagement which was carried out by the North Local Area Committee team and partnership organisations. This had helped to form the 3 main themes of the Community Plan: Transport and Highways, Environment, and Community. These were broad 'headlines' with cross-cutting issues which would be prioritised and explored further. The aim had been to identify areas of work that could make a difference to local communities. Following agreement of the plan, further engagement would take place about specific projects and aims.

5.2 A member of the public enquired whether it was now just a question of signing off headlines as the plan is yet to emerge? Extensive consultation has been carried out, but the numbers were low in terms of a population percentage. Could this be boosted?

In response, the Chair noted that the part of the consultation process had been undertaken when Covid-19 restrictions had prevented face-to-face meetings. He advised that some community groups had provided positive feedback on the draft plan. The Chair was aware of the lack of consultation with young plan and noted

that it was an emerging plan.

David Luck agreed and explained that the Community Plan would grow and develop over time. This process would be informed by regular meetings held between members and officers, statistical information obtained from the survey, and also from the vast knowledge that members had on their communities. He noted that future consultations might be modified and be carried out more broadly and creatively.

5.3 The Chair read out a question from Will Nash, who was not present at the meeting:

Why is 'community safety and crime' not one of the 3 area priorities when it was the least liked and third highest for improvements in the area overall?

The written response provided to Mr Nash was as follows:

As you say, community safety and crime was one of the four main areas identified in consultation.

I then went through individual comments and whilst these varied there were a lot about lack of Police presence.

The question for the LAC is what are the elements of community safety and crime it can address? Clearly, much of this lies primarily with the Police who we work closely with.

The LAC needs to consider the type of areas where it can be involved in tangible work and I would hope those issues around ASB can be picked up within the proposed priorities for example:

- Safe roads – measures to address concerns about speeding
- Vibrant community life – positive activities for young people; promoting the work of local Police teams; working with housing colleagues around concerns within social housing
- Clean & attractive environment – work around graffiti & fly tipping

Over the coming months we will explore key issues further in order to bring forth projects and develop an action plan.

At the heart of our work is the development of strong working relationships within communities and with service deliverers. In this way, over time, we hope to make progress on the issues people have raised with us

5.4 A member of the public noted that the Community Plan had been talked for a long time about the plan, and now residents were ready for action. The questioner asked whether there were any examples of projects to improve the quality of life for people, the young and the old? In terms of 'levelling up', what were our members/MP doing to improve the quality of life for north Sheffield residents? Council Tax and energy costs were increasing and member/MP support was

needed to make sure a fair share of funding was received compared to more affluent areas.

Councillor Grocutt agreed that it was time to listen and take action. In 2014 the Council had been unsuccessful in its bid for Future High Street funding in Stocksbridge, but this had led to a successful 'Town Fund' bid. This was already showing tangible differences in the quality of life and health and wellbeing of local residents. She advised that there had been lots of investment in improvement to local parks. A lesson learned from Covid-19 was how much Sheffield's open space was valued. Local Area Committees had funding for dealing with issues such as flytipping, graffiti and dog fouling. This funding had supported investigations into 'hotspot' areas of flytipping, dealing with worst areas first, and was helping to improve areas and to enable residents to take pride in their local areas. There was also much support from community organisations, including local litter picking groups. There were a number of ongoing projects and Councillor Grocutt noted the importance of members communicating these fully to local residents.

5.5 Councillor Penny Baker was pleased that funding was now available to direct locally to support communities. She noted that Stannington was a huge ward which had struggled in the past for financial support. Recent funding had allowed local members to work with and to support local people and local parks. These projects included:

- Work was being carried out in parks in Stannington, Wadsley Park Village and Worrall to make improvements and to provide playground equipment that was suitable for children with disabilities;
- In Rivelin valley, some Section 106 money had contributed towards a plan to improve the area;
- Flytipping had been a major blight, and members had worked with communities on locating 'hotspot' cameras;
- A speed camera had been installed on a problematic road between Stocksbridge and Stannington, which had involved working with community groups and residents;
- Gates had been erected around a community space to stop 4x4 vehicles accessing and spoiling the land.

Councillor Baker noted that a lot of work was being done due to now having more support through the Local Area Committees. She reiterated that once the basic framework of the Community Plan had been agreed, it would then be necessary to prioritise projects and direct resources where they were needed.

5.6 The Chair noted that the North Local Area Committee had the added benefit of including a town council and two parish councils. The north was a large geographical area but had great assets such as countryside and open space. This also meant some unique issues such as poor connectivity, rural isolation and transport difficulties. There were some areas of deprivation within the north and the Chair felt that improving provisions for young people would be beneficial to those areas in particular.

- 5.7 Dave Ogle, High Green Parish Councillor, felt the Community Plan was a good basis to start from. He was concerned that the facilities of the Parish and Town Councils would not be used to their fullest extent and was keen to ensure that the Local Area Committee worked with them so as not to go over the same ground. He advised of plans for a boxing club that were being drawn up and hoped that the Council could work with them to signpost to any possible funding for the new building. He also mentioned plans for a new club house for Thorncliffe Bowling and Tennis Club were currently going through the planning process, and if successful was hoped to decrease social isolation in the area.

In terms of youth crime, Mr Ogle advised that Ecclesfield Parish Council had allocated almost £20,000 in initiatives to prevent anti-social behaviour and to look at engaging young people, for example via volunteering. He hoped that Local Area Committees could use their experience and get involved in at 'ground level' and provide help such as signposting to funding. He noted that the Parish and Town Councils were great assets and should be recognised as such.

The Chair thanked Mr Ogle for his input and confirmed that the North Local Area Committee would continue to work with the Parish and Town Councils. Councillor Julie Grocutt also noted the value in working on local strategies together.

- 5.8 **RESOLVED:** that:-

- (a) Approval be given to the North Community Plan as a statement of the priorities of the area;
- (b) Authority be given to the Community Services Manager to produce a final version of the Community Plan document, incorporating any amendments approved by the LAC at this meeting, and to publish it on the webpages of the North Local Area Committee;
- (c) Notes that future LAC decisions relating to funding must fit with the priorities set out in the Community Plan and following engagement with the community; and
- (d) Thanks be given to the Community Services Manager and the North Local Area Committee team for their hard work in preparing the Community Plan.

- 5.9 **Reasons for Decision**

The proposal to approve the North LAC Community Plan is recommended on the basis that the Plan provides a clear framework in how the LAC will direct its resources to address key issues identified through community consultation.

- 5.10 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

None. A key element in establishing LACs is the principle that each LAC will develop a Community Plan.

- 5.11 Breakout sessions took place to give attendees the opportunity to discuss

implementation of the key themes within the Community Plan.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 The Committee received the following question from a member of the public who had submitted questions prior to the meeting, and who was in attendance to raise it:-

6.1.1 Question 1 – Matthew Wilson

(a) At the last meeting, the state of Mortomley Close, an un-adopted road in High Green was raised and there was a commitment to take this back to the council to find out more information.

Since then a question was raised at Full Council about it and it was suggested approaching the LAC, and seeing what could be done in the meantime. Can members inform me if any members of the LAC had taken this issue back to the council and if so what were they told.

The Chair noted that the first question had been raised at the North LAC online event that was held on 27 January 2022, and also at full Council on 2 March 2022, where Councillor Paul Wood gave a response.

Councillor Mike Levery queried whether there was any written evidence available that could be considered. He noted that Councillor Wood had made it clear in his response (to full Council) that the Council would be held legally responsible for any work they carried out to an unadopted road. He had heard of other unadopted roads which the Council had agreed to resurface. Where future repairs were required on these roads, the Council would organise the works and would then recharge residents.

(b) I have been approached by tenants living in the bungalows on the corner of Bevan Way. They are concerned about the security of their communal garden. They inform me that they had contacted the Council with proposals to partition the land and had provided quotes for the fencing.

Unfortunately they were turned down. They were told they couldn't partition the garden as it was a communal garden. However, there are a number of communal gardens on Bevan Way with communal gardens that they've partitioned. They were also told they couldn't partition the garden as the Council need access to cut the lawn. Tenants tell me though they cut it themselves.

It seems to me as it's their garden which they maintain themselves and they have said they are willing to pay for it at no cost to the council then why shouldn't they be able to partition it. Could members advise whether they would investigate and review the previous decision made.

The Chair thanked Mr Wilson for his questions and asked him to forward the details of the bungalows concerned. He would then be able to seek a full

response from officers who would be able to investigate the details of their tenancy agreements.

6.2 The Committee received the following question from a member of the public which was submitted prior to the meeting:-

6.2.1 **Question 2** – Alan Bilton (read out by the Chair)

Over the last 15 years the lower section of Church Street, Ecclesfield, between Mill Road and The Common, has experienced problems of surface water flooding. Sheffield City Council is aware of these problems and I would like to know:-

- (a) Their view as to the cause of these problems
- (b) Why nothing has been done to alleviate the problems
- (c) Why, despite meetings and visits from various Council officials, the Council has not communicated with residents
- (d) What can now be done to remedy the situation.

In response, the Chair advised that he would seek a full response from officers in order to provide Mr Bilton with full clarity on the issues he had raised.

7. TRANSITION TO COMMITTEES

7.1 The Committee received a presentation given by Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance, which outlined the changes to the Council's Committee System. She stated that in May 2021 a public referendum voted to change the Council's governance structure to a committee system in May 2022. Changing the structure also meant a change in how decisions were made. Following on from the referendum result, a Governance Committee was set up. Over the last year, members had worked together as a cross party committee to set out what the new structure might look like.

A public inquiry was held in December, 2021, which included evidence from experts, members of the public and community representatives. The information gathered at the inquiry was used to help design a new model, which was then recommended to, and agreed at, the Council meeting of 23 March, 2022. The new structure would be formally implemented at the Annual General Meeting of the Council, scheduled for 18 May, 2022. A full review of the structure would take place six months later, which would involve input from the public.

The Council currently functioned via a model of governance that consisted of a Leader and 10 Executive members. The Executive team currently made most of the decisions. Transitional Committees had been set up in July 2021 to help with the shift to the new structure and had given members the opportunity to work cross-party.

7.2 A member of the public asked how chairs of the committees would be appointed; would this be decided by the Leader, the majority party or decided amongst the committee members?

In response, Gillian Duckworth advised that chairs of the new committees would be appointed by full council at Annual General Meeting on 18 May 2022. Each committee would have the ability to change this over time.

- 7.3 Another public questioner asked whether Local Area Committees had staff working exclusively to support the work of the Committee, would there be reports of this Local Area Committee to full Council every month, and was this considered to be an efficient way to push the work of the Committee?

In response, the Chair advised that the North Local Area Committee had a designated team that was supported by Democratic Services and technical staff. There were also officers within other services that could be called on to answer specific queries. He also noted that Local Area Committees were autonomous of full Council and had their own decision-making mechanisms.

Gillian added that teams were being created with nominated officers that would support the new policy committees in their functions.

In response to the question about referring matters from Local Area Committees, Gillian advised that although there was currently no formal reporting mechanism, this was expected to be added as an agenda item for future meetings of full Council.

- 7.4 Another public question was raised, asking what the current position was regarding the Chief Executive of the Council and had arrangements been put in place to allow business to continue in her absence.

Gillian advised that interim arrangements had been put in place to ensure that the Council could continue to fully operate.

8. DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER FOR NOTING

- 8.1 A report was given by David Luck, detailing a delegated decision made by the Community Services Manager in consultation with the Chair of the North Local Area Committee. This was for the sum of £650 to erect a 'Give way' sign on Stephen Lane in Grenoside; a measure proposed by Strategic Transport, Sustainability and Infrastructure to manage traffic on a narrow street.

- 8.2 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee notes the contents of the report.

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