

South West Local Area Committee

Meeting held 14 July 2022

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

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Martin Smith.

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 17th March and 18th May 2022, were approved as correct records

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Committee received the following questions from members of the public who had submitted the questions prior to the meeting, and who attended the meeting to raise them:-

(a) Chris Cutforth

What are the key success factors in ensuring that the local area committee system, and specifically the South West LAC, enhances local democracy and adds value to people's lives?

In response, the Chair stated that Local Area Committees (LACs) were part of the flagship Empowering Communities Programme the Council had set up, following on from feedback from the Big City Conversations – residents said they didn't feel involved in local decision making. Seven LACs had been established

across the city, giving greater access to Members in local settings. The Council encouraged active participation at public meetings – of which there will be a minimum of four during the Municipal Year. The LAC Survey received over 7,000 responses, 20% of which were from the south west – this gave residents the opportunity to express views and say what was important to them. The results of the survey had contributed to shaping the seven Community Plans across the city, with priorities identified by the public. Success will be performance against these priorities, which will be regularly monitored and reported back at future public meetings.

A full, written response would be sent to Mr Cutforth.

(b) Alana Clarke

1. Was there a Council policy about the change in grass cutting practice in 2021. If so, what was that policy?
2. Has the Council policy been changed since the first cutting in 2022?
3. If the policy has changed, what is it?

In response, Councillor Barbara Masters stated that, whilst she had already spoken Ms Clarke, and provided her with a response, the response from Parks and Countryside below, which she read out at the meeting, may help further.

For questions 1 and 3 - Parks and Countryside have been actively working on biodiversity improvements around the city including relaxed mowing, additional wildflower meadows, increased tree planting, naturalisation, additional sustainable drainage schemes, wildlife ponds, chemical reduction, recycling, waste minimisation and a host of small projects.

Following the initial lock down in 2020 that saw huge increases in park usage and staffing challenges as a result of Covid, Parks and Countryside took the initiative to look at options to change previous long-standing grass land management using local site knowledge to relax grass areas in appropriate places with the aim of increasing biodiversity, creating new grassland meadows, leading to a slightly more relaxed feel for many sites whilst trying to balance the need for general amenity grass for casual use and play, with approximately 47 hectares of amenity grass relaxed in 2020, with a further 35 hectares relaxed in 2021, with work ongoing with the aim of increasing changes further although this becomes harder as the majority of larger sites have now been modified. These changes were not financially led as methods required to cut and collect generally were more labour intensive. The changes were driven by the Council's desire to improve biodiversity and respond to climate change with changing demands of the majority of park users for a combination on naturalistic and general amenity landscape management.

The changes in grass land management had been exceptionally well received, including many other core cities around the UK. We have received a few complaints, and we have tried to respond and change appropriately, including

Bingham Park.

For question 2 - Following regular stakeholder meetings with Bingham Park Community Group (BPCG) and at the request of local Councillors, the Council agreed to reduce the amount of naturalised areas on the old pitch and putt area and to the rear of properties on Bingham Park Road, increasing amenity grass areas for general play. Councillors and BPCG agreed that moving forward additional consultation on grass land management should be part of any further plans and changes.

(c) Paul May

1. Would it be possible to publish the full written responses to questions raised by members of the public at previous meetings of the Committee?

In response, the Chair stated that arrangements would be made for such responses to be included as part of the agendas for future meetings.

2. Will there still be a role for Ward Forums and their Councillors? A new model could be to hold a ward meeting shortly before the next LAC meeting.

In response, the Chair stated that Ecclesall Forum was an important stakeholder to the LAC, and that there was already a good working relationship between the Ecclesall Ward Councillors and Ecclesall Forum. The four Wards within the LAC boundary had different compositions, and the LAC doesn't want a one size fits all approach. The LAC is more than just the four public meetings per year.

3. I am interested to see that a source of information and data that will be used to influence decisions is Councillors casework. Will this source represent a significant number of residents or are there only a small number of comments that will not be very representative of the whole of the SW area? eg for idling engines (as an aside I commend the work that Silverdale School has been doing on idling engines and bad parking - it may be worth exploring).

In response, the Chair stated that the LAC Community Plan had been developed mainly using the results of the LAC Survey. Whilst 20% of the responses were received from people living in the south west area of the city, the LAC was concerned that the results of the survey were not representative of the area, therefore input from Councillors, both through their involvement with local community groups and their individual casework. It was not expected, however, that a Councillor would consider a piece of their casework as representative of the views expressed in a Council Ward, as they were expected to represent the whole of their respective Wards.

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

(a) Stuart Wilson

Despite promises made by the Council, some five years ago, as part of the proposals to review its leisure facilities, there were still no plans for the provision of an indoor crown green bowling facility in the city. We were told that such a facility would be provided as part of the developments at either Concorde or Springs, and a survey of all crown green bowling clubs in the city indicated that Springs would be the ideal location. What is the current position regarding the provision of such a facility at Springs Leisure Centre, the development of which was due to commence in 2023?

In response, the Chair stated that under the new Committee system, it was likely that at least one Councillor on the LAC would be a member of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee, responsible for this issue.

Further to comments by Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed, who referred to the indoor crown green bowling facility at Stocksbridge Leisure Centre, Mr Wilson pointed out that this was some distance from the city centre, and that there was a need for such a facility near the city centre. He stressed that crown green bowling was important for people's physical and mental health, particularly for older people, as well as helping with social isolation.

Councillor Sue Alston stated that a report on the review of leisure facilities was due to be considered by the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee shortly, and that she would raise this issue at the meeting. She would also inform Mr Wilson of the date of such meeting, so that he could attend and raise the issue himself.

The Chair added that, in the meantime, the issue would be referred to the Chair of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee.

(b) Tim Lewis

I wish to raise the following questions regarding the Low Traffic Neighbourhood Scheme in Crookes:-

1. What was the baseline data that was gathered, and subsequently used to form the implementation of the Scheme?
2. Why had Crookes been identified as a Low Traffic Neighbourhood, and who made that decision?
3. Why has the implementation of a number of concepts of the Scheme been so shambolic, such as the one-way section on Spring Vale Road?
4. What are the measures for the failures or successes of the Scheme?
5. How long were the residents of Crookes going to have to put up with the Scheme?

In response, the Chair stated that the decisions on where the Low Neighbourhood Traffic Scheme would be located had been made by the former, relevant Cabinet Member. It was expected that a report on the monitoring of the Scheme would be submitted to the relevant Policy Committee after September 2022. He added that when it had become apparent that it was a big issue for Crookes residents, the LAC had arranged additional consultation on the Scheme, which included drop-in sessions for residents, and which had resulted in some very useful feedback.

Councillor Tim Huggan stated that the Crookes Ward Councillors had not seen the baseline data used prior to the implementation of the Scheme, and had only received a briefing from officers. He believed that the reason why Crookes area had been chosen as one of the two locations for the trial scheme was due to the high number of people who had requested it. The Ward Councillors had asked for a follow-up meeting with the Joint Chairs of the relevant Policy Committee to discuss the feedback from residents, and he encouraged residents to continue to put forward their views.

Councillor Ruth Milsom stated that she concurred with the view that the Crookes local Ward Councillors had received minimal information whilst the Scheme was being developed, and that there should have been more opportunity for public engagement during the design process. She also encouraged residents to put forward their views as part of the ongoing consultation process, and stressed that every effort would be made to encourage those residents who don't usually attend public meetings, or take part in consultation events, to put forward their views, to ensure that the feedback was adequately weighted.

Councillor Minesh Parekh stated that he concurred with the views expressed by his fellow Ward Councillors, and that he hoped that changes, based on the feedback received, would be made to the Scheme in real time. Councillor Parekh stated that he hoped that there would be both qualitative and quantitative assessments of all elements of the Scheme, particularly the environmental impacts, such as changes in modes of travel and vehicle emissions.

6. SOUTH WEST LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE - PROPOSED SPEND 2022/23

- 6.1 The Local Area Committee (LAC) received a presentation from Denise Devoto (South West Local Area Committee Manager) on proposed spend against the £100,000 budget to address local priorities in the South West LAC Community Plan 2022/23. The South West Delivery Plan was also submitted for information.
- 6.2 Ms Devoto reported on the proposed spend under each of the three priority areas – Transport and Highways, Local Environment and Community and Neighbourhoods).
- 6.3 At the conclusion of the presentation, a series of breakout groups were organised, which comprised members of the public, both in person and on-line, as part of the trial of hybrid meetings, a Council officer and a member of the Committee leading the discussion. Each group was asked to discuss the

following:-

- (a) As a resident, how might you be able to support these initiatives?
- (b) Do you have any ideas as to what could have the greatest impact (resource permitting) to address these issues?
- (c) Do you have any suggestions as to things that the LAC team could explore as potential solutions?
- (d) Are you aware of any examples of best practice in these areas (both here and abroad)?
- (e) What would success look like?

6.4 The Committee Members of each group then summarised the comments raised at their respective tables, as follows:-

(1) Transport and Highways

- Active Travel Initiatives:-
 - need for secure storage facilities for bicycle, particularly electric bikes
 - concerns as to whether the bicycle pumps represented good value for money
- Concerns regarding the levels of consultation and a lack of access for emergency vehicles on some roads
- Crookes Low Traffic Neighbourhood – whilst some elements of the scheme were welcomed, there were concerns with regard to poor communications, engagement and consultation overall
- Double yellow lines required at the junction of Spring Vale Road and Commons side
- Requests for 20 mph zones in the area to be rolled out as soon as possible
- Operation Park Safe – operated by the police, which allows the public to log incidents of inconsiderate or dangerous parking
- Need to learn from the success of electric bike hire schemes in other areas. The south west would be an ideal area to trial a scheme, given the mixed terrain
- No idling signs outside schools were often ignored by motorists – money would be better spent on better/increased enforcement, or having larger signs

- Need to look at road safety throughout the area, and target double-yellow lines at locations of greatest need, rather than just agreeing one scheme for each Ward
- School Streets had helped to improve road safety, and further consideration was needed with schools in connection with their Active Travel Plans
- Need to encourage more young people to use public transport, by possibly providing free travel, as well as walking and cycling
- Increased use of car pooling should be encouraged
- There was an increase in traffic in Banner Cross, and there was a need to review the junction of Ecclesall Road and Psalter Lane

(2) Local Environment

- Dog Fouling:-
 - not viewed as a specific problem in Dore and Totley mainly due to owner responsibility
 - need to consider whether improved, or more, signage would be better than having more bins
 - need for more regular emptying of dog bins
 - look at possible use of spray chalk to mark any fouling
- Need to identify more parks and green spaces for use by the community
- Some Parks Friends Groups could improve their communication to try and get more people involved, and to disseminate information better in terms of the various activities available
- Support for community renewables, as well as smaller projects, such as energy efficient measures
- Coppicing – use of fuel and building materials ??
- Look to implement small-scale projects in parks, such as using turbines for educational projects

(3) Community and Neighbourhoods

- Need to support community organisations in reaching out to people, particularly those hard to reach individuals/communities to keep them informed of the various activities available to them

- More emphasis needs to be given to promoting existing activities, whilst improving communicating this, such as posting details of activities on noticeboards in public places, such as libraries and GP surgeries
- Look at having a friendship bench somewhere in the area, which would attract people outside, and talk to others, particularly those living on their own, of all ages
- Need to look at expanding the intergenerational work being undertaken
- Need to look at what crime statistics could be shared publicly, which would hopefully reduce people's fear of crime
- Need to look at how businesses in the area could assist in terms of helping young people to find employment, by offering apprenticeships or other forms of training
- Support should be given to Community Transport, so that people could get out and about

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Local Area Committee:-

- (i) notes the proposed anticipated expenditure against the £100,000 budget to address local priorities in the South West LAC Community Plan in 2022/23, as detailed in the report: and
- (ii) to the extent that it is not covered by existing authority, authorises the Community Services Manager to make decisions on expenditure relating to the priorities set out in the report provided that:-
 - the decision is taken in consultation with the Local Area Committee Chair,
 - the decision may not approve expenditure on any element in excess of the anticipated limit for that element set out in the report; and
 - a report detailing the delegated spending decisions taken by the Community Services Manager is presented to the next Local Area Committee meeting.

6.6 Reasons for Decision

The South West LAC is asked to note the broad allocation of funding under the priority headings identified to assist its ability to monitor its budget, and to authorise the Community Services Manager to approve expenditure above the current delegated authority in certain circumstances so that delivery of the Community Plan is not delayed.

6.7 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

Decisions on any expenditure above the existing authority to the Community Services Manager could be reserved to the LAC but this would delay delivery of priority actions to address specific issues identified in the Community Plan.

All decisions on expenditure to support Community Plan priorities could be delegated to officers. However, this would restrict the LAC's ability to monitor its delegated budget and delivery of the Community Plan.

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