

SOUTH WEST AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES

THURSDAY 11TH JUNE 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

6.30 PM

Present: Bridge Ward Councillors: C Allen, B Rudkin and P Smart
Gipping Ward Councillors: D Ellesmere, P Gardiner and E Hughes
Sprites Ward Councillors: H Armitage, C Smart and J Smith
Stoke Park Ward Councillors: N Cenci, T Grant and B Hall

Suffolk County Councillor: J Abbott

1. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 12 March 2020**

Resolved:

that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 March 2020 be signed as a true record.

3. **To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business**

Resolved:

that the Order of Business be as printed on the agenda.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5. **Residents Question and Answer Session**

5.1. No questions had been submitted prior to the meeting.

6. Updates from Ipswich Borough Council and Other Public Sector Organisations

6.1. Suffolk Constabulary Update

Inspector Graefe issued a thank you on behalf of Suffolk Police to the whole community for the way in which residents had conducted themselves and worked hard to abide by the new rules and legislation which had been issued during the Covid-19 pandemic. This had allowed Officers to focus on other priorities including the response to the Covid-19 situation, the most vulnerable people in the community and to be more proactive in general.

Within the West of Ipswich, commercial burglaries had been identified as a priority, with the second priority focussed around 'cuckooed' addresses, of which two individuals from London based County gangs had been arrested, and safeguarding measures had been put in place for the occupants involved. The importance of intelligence provided from the community was noted, as this had helped assist the arrests, and engagement would continue with vulnerable victims to ensure that reoffending would not re-occur.

There had been fewer demand overall in terms of calls and crime reported and therefore this had allowed outstanding workloads to be completed and offered further opportunity for Officers to support and engage with the community.

In response to a question around whether there had been an effect on staff numbers due to the pandemic, it was confirmed that the impact from staff absence had not been near the levels which had been anticipated and working from home had been enabled officers who were "shielding" to continue to work.

Councillor Allen detailed her disappointment with regards to the apology which had been issued by Suffolk Police concerning an incident on Lavender Hill. Inspector Graefe confirmed that an internal investigation had begun to consider the incident further and apologised on behalf of the organisation.

In response to a question regarding the number of complaints received about breaches of social distancing, Inspector Graefe confirmed that there had been a number of complaints (which continued to be received) and officers had been engaging, encouraging and using enforcement where necessary, should people continue to breach the legislation.

6.2. Suffolk County Council Update

County Councillor West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Communities and Waste, confirmed that Suffolk County Council had been working with all District and Borough Councils in Suffolk and other organisations such as the Fire Service, Police, NHS and Environment Agency to provide a co-ordinated response across all high level areas in Suffolk.

With regards to vulnerable young people, and in particular Urban Street Gangs and County Lines, the County Council had continued to engage in this area with face to face engagement with those identified as high risk, following the social distancing rules. Where young people had been considered at medium

or lower risk, engagement had continued via social media platforms and through phone calls. The families of those individuals had also been engaged with to ensure that there was no additional conflict in the household and that any concerns could be identified (such as the requirement for food provisions etc). Referrals to the Diversion Programme also continued to be accepted.

Suffolk Libraries had announced that they would be re-opening branches from Monday 6th July 2020 with plans due to be publicised at a later date with regards to how safety and social distancing measures would be maintained. Further information and guidance would be issued around the re-openings in the future weeks.

A number of road closures had been proposed by Suffolk County Council with regards to enabling more walking and cycling to be undertaken around the town centre with social distancing rules maintained. Unfortunately, due to the time scales, it had not been possible to undertake the usual consultation with Councillors however, a meeting would be taking place with Ipswich Borough Councillors next week to discuss the temporary scheme, of which any feedback could be considered further by Officers. The initial funding from the Department for Transport had been granted and it was likely that a further £1.3m would be allocated.

Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough and Ipswich Central continued to work closely to ensure the town centre would be prepared for when retail outlets could open from Monday 15th June.

Discussion took place around the disappointment amongst councillors that a consultation had not been undertaken with the Borough Council and it was agreed that more information around the road closures should be released to residents as soon as possible as there had been several questions already raised. It was confirmed that any public queries could be sent to transport.schemes@suffolk.gov.uk.

It was confirmed that with regards to the second tranche of funding, this would be granted towards improvements to walking and cycling within local areas and opportunities would be available for councillors to put forward ideas/feedback on any proposed schemes.

County Councillor Abbott asked for further clarification around why Suffolk County Council still intended to agree cuts to Children's Centres during the pandemic. It was confirmed that the County Council had carried out the consultation around the creation of family hubs within the County and noted that within the package of measures which had been proposed, no cuts would be made and this would be a cost neutral decision with the funds re-distributed toward activities which were expected to improve engagement with vulnerable people in the community. The changes in Ipswich would mean the creation of four family hubs, with three part time, and the structure would be adapted to the current situation (such as the need for more remote working etc.) It was reiterated that there would not be a cut in funding to the service and it was

hoped that with the proposal of the “family hubs”, this would help to ensure that those most vulnerable could be better engaged with.

Councillor Armitage asked for clarification around whether the cycling schemes which had been proposed by the County Council prior to the Covid-19 pandemic would be delivered and where/how this would be funded. It was confirmed that the funding which had been made available by the Government following the pandemic would not be used to address the proposals which had previously been discussed and that the council would be bidding for money from the Department for Transport over the upcoming years for those specific ones. The most recent funding would be used as an added “extra” and the strategic list of priorities already considered which required other funding, would be taken to Cabinet next week.

6.3. Ipswich Borough Council Update

Russell Williams, Chief Executive, confirmed that information around the schemes discussed would be circulated to Ipswich Borough Councillors as part of the weekly briefing, and advised that although a meeting would be held next week for some Councillors to attend, all Councillors would still have the opportunity to raise any questions/concerns if they wished to. As mentioned, the deadlines had affected the possibility of full consultations this time however, it was hoped that there would be better and fuller consultation going forward.

As discussed, work had been undertaken with Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Central and Suffolk Constabulary with regards to the reopening of the town centre. It had been agreed that Upper Brook Street would be closed to traffic during peak hours for the foreseeable future and further work with partners would continue to consider how and when bars, restaurants and coffee shops could open from potentially July onwards.

Mr Williams advised that the upcoming months would be more challenging than the previous, and considerable efforts would continue into the provision of community support. Councillors would be advised of the current financial position in the next weekly email with weekly communication set to continue. Mr Williams noted that the support from Councillors across the town towards employees at this time had also been appreciated.

7. SWAC/20/01 Area Committee Grants and Financial Update

- 7.1. Shirley Jarlett, Head of Governance, presented the Area Committee Financial update and confirmed that the total budget available at the start of the meeting was £44,218.00. It was recommended that Officers be allowed to vary the funding guidelines to allow Area Committee funds to be made available to help deal with the Coronavirus pandemic. This would enable projects which had been set up as a direct response to the pandemic to be presented to the Area Committee, as many projects which would normally be considered may not be appropriate at this time due to the social distancing measures.

It was Resolved:-

- (a) that the financial statement in Appendix 1 be noted;**
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Head of Governance, to take all necessary steps to:**
 - advertise the availability of Area Committee Grants to support communities in recovering from the Coronavirus outbreak;**
 - enable the consideration of applications in relation to this scheme at the September meeting of this Area Committee;**
- (c) that £500.00 funding be allocated per ward to establish a Making A Difference (MAD) budget for 2020/21;**
- (d) that £300 from the South West Area Committee budget for costs associated with advertising and potential venue hire for the 2020/21 be allocated.**

Reasons:

- (a) To provide clear and transparent details of the amount of funds available to the Area Committee;
- (b) To enable Area Committee funding to be used to support communities in recovering from the Coronavirus Pandemic;
- (c) To allow the Area Committee to devolve up to 10% of its annual budget to support small scale community initiatives;
- (d) To facilitate the good running of the Area Committee.

The meeting closed at 7.31 pm

Chair